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A matter of time? Temporality, agency and the cosmopolitan in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro and Timothy Mo

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**A Matter of Time? Temporality, Agency and the Cosmopolitan in the
Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro and Timothy Mo**

Gordon Andrew Spark

PhD

University of Dundee

February 2011

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Elisabeth.

Abstract

The emergence of novelists such as Kazuo Ishiguro and Timothy Mo in the final decades of the twentieth century has often been taken as evidence of an increasing multiculturalism both in Britain and the wider world, as well as in British literature itself. With their dual British-Asian heritage and their interrogation of notions of history, identity and agency, these authors are often celebrated as proponents of the cosmopolitan novel, a genre which rejects binary notions of East and West or national interest in favour of a transnational mode of cooperation and cohabitation. Reading against the grain of such celebratory notions of the cosmopolitan, this thesis suggests that if the novels of Ishiguro and Mo are concerned with the exigencies of the cosmopolitan world, then they portray that world as one which remains split and haunted by divisions between East and West, past and present, self and 'other'. That is, they present a cosmopolitan world in which the process of negotiation and contact is difficult, confrontational and often violent.

Drawing upon Fredric Jameson's notion of the 'political unconscious', I suggest that these novels in fact reveal the origins of the rather deeper divisions which have emerged in the first decade of the twenty first century, analysing the ways in which they reveal a degree of cultural incommensurability, frustrated cosmopolitan agency and the enduring power and appeal of the nation state. I also suggest that the contemporary critical obsession with the spatial – whereby cosmopolitanism's work is carried out in 'Third Spaces', interstitial sites, and border zones – fails to recognize the importance of temporal concerns to the experience of cosmopolitan living. My analysis of the novels of Ishiguro and Mo is thus concerned with the way in which the temporal is a key concern of these works at both a narratological and thematic level. In particular, I identify a curious 'double-time' of cosmopolitanism, whereby the busyness which we might expect of the period is counterpointed by a simultaneous sense of stasis and inactivity. I argue that it is within this unsettling contemporary 'double-time' that the cracks and fissures in the narrative of cosmopolitanism begin to emerge.

Introduction

In a recent interview to publicise his collection of short stories, *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*, Kazuo Ishiguro reflected upon the fact that each of the stories is set in the same period:

I wanted the stories all to fall in that time between the fall of the Berlin Wall and 9/11...I wanted them all to have that setting...I didn't want them set in the contemporary world, but [rather] one that wasn't conscious of things like the clash of civilisations...I look back to that time now and I almost get nostalgic about it. There was a lot of smugness, and you can see a lot of the seeds of things that didn't go so well. But it was a time of great optimism-the end of history and so on.¹

In this thesis, I wish to return to the novels produced by Ishiguro and by one of his contemporaries, Timothy Mo, immediately before and during that period identified by Ishiguro. The emergence of authors such as Ishiguro and Mo in the latter decades of the twentieth century is most often seen as a celebration and reflection of an increasingly cosmopolitan, international outlook which seems to characterise both Britain and her literature during that period. I want to return to these novels in order to seek out the traces of these 'seeds of things that didn't go so well' and to explore the extent to which, in addition to celebrating an emerging multiculturalism, these novels simultaneously probe the limitations and blind spots of such a transnational outlook, reflecting the fact that cosmopolitan readings of such novels 'tend to downplay or dismiss paradigms of rootedness, territoriality, and other geocultural factors of political identity'² which nevertheless often return to haunt such novels.

In suggesting that we might trace these histories in the texts from that period I am drawing upon Fredric Jameson's theory of the 'political unconscious', the notion that all texts must unavoidably contain traces of the historical circumstances in which they were produced but that these traces are invariably buried deep within the novel's

¹ Bryan Appleyard, *Perfect Pitch*, Sunday Times, 3 May 2009, Culture section, p.6.

² Wai-Chew Sim. *Globalization and Dislocation in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (Lewiston N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), p.2.

‘unconscious’, that is, below the manifest surface content of the novel. Thus the critic’s task becomes one of attending to the novel’s form and ‘restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of...fundamental history’³. As such, the narratives produced by Ishiguro and Mo to some extent at least expose, within their narrative structures, the failure of Britain and the West in general to realise the potential of cross-cultural contact in the final two decades of the twentieth century and suggest the emergence of deeper national, ethnic and religious divisions which would re-establish themselves at the beginning of the new millennium.

My belief is that we need to read the cosmopolitan novel as a time-bound medium. Ishiguro’s prognosis of the era, with its backward glance, its reference to nostalgia and its allusion to ‘the end of history’, seems rooted in time and invites consideration of the ways in which that temporality is represented in the narratives produced during that period. Jameson reminds us that the latter decades of the twentieth century are most often read as an age ‘dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time’⁴. Cosmopolitanism’s positive work is carried out at interstitial sites, in ‘third spaces’, at borders and boundaries and intersections, where cross-cultural contacts lead to new hybridised forms of meaning and identity and the circulation of cultural forms and meanings. The majority of cosmopolitan literary criticism has focussed on the representation of these cosmopolitan spaces, and on ‘the ways in which new cross-border movements facilitate the production and reworking of multiple identities, enabling the renegotiation of formerly static meanings and metanarratives by opening

³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p.20.

⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992), p.16.

up possibilities for new subject positions’⁵. Far less attention has been afforded the temporal qualities of such border movements, or the fact that reworkings and renegotiations are often both enabled and undone by the passage of time. Yet it seems impossible to ignore the ways in which the novels of Ishiguro and Mo very ostentatiously play with time. One of the claims of this thesis is that the cosmopolitan novel is inextricably bound up with time and that it is therefore time to turn from an analysis of representations of space back to a study of the temporal form of these narratives, or at least to afford such temporal matters an equitable level of attention. That is, it is time to return to time.

To enact such a turn is to suggest that the analysis of the temporal structures of these novels can have a larger political purpose. Time is rarely given attention as a social or political category and yet, as Eva Hoffman suggests, ‘human time – our life cycles and daily rhythms – is a dimension of our experience as fundamental and formative as ideology or identity’⁶. Just as ideology and identity have developed into two of the key concerns of the novel, so we might also expect to find the political impact of temporality wrapped up in the novel’s form. If narratology in general is concerned with ‘the interface between word and world’⁷ then we might correspondingly view the concern of this thesis as being the interface between ‘time’ and ‘the times’, that is, a concern with the ways in which the representation of narrative time and temporality in these novels interacts with, influences and reflects the temporal experience of cosmopolitan living in the final decades of the twentieth century, including the kinds of stories that literature tells itself about the cosmopolitan world. To make such a

⁵ Sim. p.1.

⁶ Eva Hoffman, ‘Living? I don’t have the time’, *The Times*, 26 September 2009, Saturday Review section, p.4.

⁷ Mieke Bal (ed.), *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies, Vol.3 Political Narratology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p.1.

claim is to reject the distinction Paul Ricoeur makes between ‘tales of time’ and ‘tales about time’. Ricoeur suggests that:

[a]ll fictional narratives are “tales of time” inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time. However, only a few are “tales about time” inasmuch as in them it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations.⁸

However, to be concerned with the temporal framework only in ‘tales about time’ is to ignore the fact that all narratives manipulate time in the telling of their tales. As Mark Currie argues, ‘[i]f we say that a narrative which obeys a more conventional temporal logic is not about time, we are merely succumbing to its naturalisation’⁹. Furthermore, as my examination of the work of Ishiguro and Mo will reveal, time – in the cosmopolitan novel – may often be ‘at stake’ in ways which are unexpected or not immediately evident. The analysis in this thesis is an attempt to resist such naturalisation of fictional time, to unpick the temporal structure of these narratives which Ricoeur would have us believe are *tales of time* but not *tales about time* and to seek, in that unpicking, the political import of such temporal structures of narrative.

I will return to the question of time, and in particular to the temporal aspects of cosmopolitanism, shortly. First of all, however, it is necessary to define more clearly what I actually mean by cosmopolitanism, and by cosmopolitan fiction. Both are difficult terms to define precisely but one possible approach is to consider cosmopolitanism in relation to two other related movements: postcolonialism and globalisation. Cosmopolitanism is commonly read as an extension of postcolonialism, sharing many of the same concerns as its predecessor, such as an interest in voice, agency and cultural hybridity, a focus on liminal spaces where identity and negotiated

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative: Volume 2*, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.101.

⁹ Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.4.

and subjectivity (re)formed, and an awareness of the ways in which the dominant political-economic systems of the day are formed discursively. However, cosmopolitan theory seeks to build upon postcolonialism's exposure of the systematic inequalities of systems of culture and economics in order to suggest a model of world citizenship in which power and agency are wielded more evenly. Thus Berthold Schoene suggests that '[i]f cosmopolitan writing differs from postcolonial writing, it is presumably to do with cosmopolitanism's attempt at untying and moving beyond imperialism's core-periphery axiomatic'¹⁰.

Such a sweeping away of that 'core-periphery axiomatic' must, however, be approached with caution. As Timothy Brennan contends, there is an inherent danger in eliding from view such binary oppositions as those traditionally exposed by postcolonial theory and analysis:

The new cosmopolitanism drifts into view as an act of avoidance if not hostility and disarticulation towards states in formation. The dichotomy and the binary almost universally deplored...continues to make sense (indeed, is demanded) dialectically, not in the name of authentic, non European culture or any other fiction but in the name of what this conflict over colonialism and postcolonialism has largely been about: collectivity, community, self-sufficiency.¹¹

There is, in other words, a danger that in embracing cosmopolitanism's apparently liberating leap beyond the binary we inadvertently throw the baby out with the bathwater. Notions of world citizenship and cosmopolitan living run the risk of neglecting those cases of collective formation and identification based around religion, culture, gender or nationality which *can* be positive, enabling and liberating.

If cosmopolitanism emerges out of postcolonialism, its relationship with globalisation is arguably even more direct and potentially confrontational. The two are often read

¹⁰ Berthold Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.25.

¹¹ Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.2.

as twin phenomena, cosmopolitanism being the intellectual or social response to the economic system of globalisation. But does cosmopolitanism rise out of globalisation, expanding the latter's purview beyond the economic to account for the broader range of cross-cultural relationships which emerge out of that economic system, or does it represent something more active and political, a mode of resistance to, and agency against, the impersonal machinations of the global economic system? Whilst it is understandably tempting to deploy cosmopolitan theory in this latter sense, as a means of acting upon a world in which the individual appears increasingly powerless, it is also problematic to seek in cosmopolitanism a panacea for the ills of globalisation. As Schoene suggests, '[i]n both theory and practice cosmopolitanism continues to harbour manifold shortcomings and its exact relationship to globalisation remains difficult to determine'¹². Whatever benefits may arise out of cosmopolitanism, they are far from evenly spread and whilst notions of active global citizenship may represent a form of agency and resistance for some, for others they are merely another consequence of the global economic system in which they find themselves trapped.

It is these shifting sands and varied experiences of the modern world that form the backdrop for the cosmopolitan novel. But to what extent does such a genre exist as an entity discrete from, for example, postcolonial literature? That the latter decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a new boundary or mode of writing and interpretation, organised around the twin notions of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, is now widely accepted. In his introduction to a special edition of the *PMLA* devoted to the globalisation of literary studies, Giles Gunn identifies 'a

¹² Schoene, p.5.

refiguration of the object of literary study and something like a revolution in the kinds of questions we put to it'¹³. Bruce King similarly sees the emergence of authors such as Ishiguro and Mo in the latter decades of the twentieth century as representing a revolution in literature, viewing them as representatives of the 'new internationalisation' of the English novel. King suggests that this 'new internationalism' represents:

a change in subject matter and sensitivities as historically significant as earlier shifts in sensibility given such names as Romanticism, Victorianism, and Modernism. This one was often termed Postcolonialism, although, as England has not been a colony for a long time, Post-imperial might be better, and I think Internationalization best.¹⁴

In fact, the 'refiguration' identified by Gunn and suggested by King seems to be precisely that from a specifically postcolonial perspective to a broader global sweep, one which makes it 'possible to articulate and facilitate potential sites of cross-cultural exchange without situating genders, races, classes as the "others" of Europe'¹⁵. But whether we designate this new mode of fiction as international, globalised or cosmopolitan, what remains constant is the emergence of a new critical idiom which looks beyond the novel's ability to imaginatively frame the nation in order to examine the ways in which contemporary fiction explores new global or transnational modes of identity and existence.

Significantly, this new interpretive mode appears to be centred upon Britain and the British contemporary novel in particular. For King:

England was once more at the centre of significant developments, and as England became multiracial and multicultural the claim that they do things better in France no longer applied. England was much better at incorporating people than most of Europe.¹⁶

¹³ Giles Gunn, 'Introduction: Globalizing Literary Studies', *PMLA*, 116.1 (January 2001), p.16.

¹⁴ Bruce King, *The Internationalization of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.1.

¹⁵ Pamela McCallum and Wendy Faith, *Linked Histories: Postcolonial Studies in a Globalized World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), pp.4-5.

¹⁶ King, p.1.

Quite what France, in particular, had done to deserve singling out in such a manner remains unclear, but King's views are echoed by Schoene in his justification for seeing Britain (rather than America) as the home of contemporary cosmopolitan novel:

contemporary Britain finds itself in a unique cultural and political position as a post-imperial and increasingly devolved nation sandwiched between neo-imperial US America and supranational 'Old' Europe. It is this in-between position and internal diversification that define contemporary Britain's specific globality: as part of its imperial heritage it is linked to over three quarters of the world, and many of its twenty-first-century citizens retain close familial ties with what used to be the Empire's colonies. Britain is also composed of at least four nations under one state roof: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Moreover, it is linked to Europe, and it entertains a special relationship with US America...As a result, it appears at times hard to think of a place more thoroughly globalised than twenty-first-century Britain.¹⁷

It seems to me that Schoene's case for a 'thoroughly globalised' Britain is built on any number of shaky foundations, from the internal struggles of the increasingly devolved 'four nations under one roof' to the tenuous, unwritten and often morally dubious 'special relationship' with the United States; from Britain's troubled relationship with her former colonies, exemplified most recently by the threat posed by home grown terrorists, to her almost equally troubled (albeit less violently so) relationship with 'supranational "Old" Europe'. All of this seems to suggest that cosmopolitanism is a potentially problematic site characterised as much by conflict and ambiguity as it is by harmony and coexistence. Furthermore, the suggestion that Britain (or England) should be a superior kind of home to cosmopolitanism, compared to its Western contemporaries, seems to reinforce the very competitive, acquisitive national interests which cosmopolitanism claims to dispose of. Noticeably, the nations that Britain appears 'better' than are her first world contemporaries: America, France, 'Old' Europe, suggesting that cosmopolitanism is predicated on worryingly familiar notions of West and East, First World and Third. Cosmopolitanism has its winners and losers, its privileged and its wretched, its

¹⁷ Schoene, pp.6-7.

civilised and its 'other'. Once again we are, perhaps, reminded of Brennan's exhortation that we dismiss the binary at our peril. In many ways the novels studied in this thesis are concerned with these cosmopolitan binaries, and in particular with the ways in which the underprivileged – the elderly, the servants, those marginalised by race, the migrants, the exiles – experience the cosmopolitan world.

Returning to Schoene's analysis, if cosmopolitanism struggles to break down the oppressor/oppressed binary then it appears to struggle similarly with the West/East or developed/undeveloped binary. That is, it is a movement which emerges out of, or has its privileged centre in, the West. Whilst it may be true that there is a form of agency in the way in which Western cultural forms are consumed and transformed out in the larger cosmopolitan world, so that we must 'look[...] at local cultures outside the West not as the passive recipients of mass culture but as sites of transformation or even active resistance'¹⁸, this seems some way off the free, multidirectional, reciprocal flow of culture which cosmopolitanism would suggest. As such, one of my aims will be to show how the novels studied in this thesis attest to the fact that the processes and experiences of globalisation and cosmopolitanism are uneven and incomplete, and are likely to vary greatly depending upon a citizen's geographical, political and cultural location.

One point at which this unevenness and ambiguity is evident is in the status of the nation in the contemporary cosmopolitan world. Notions of cosmopolitanism and globalisation serve to weaken the nation state by inviting citizens to think beyond national and political boundaries in order to see themselves as part of a larger, global

¹⁸ Paul Jay, 'Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English', *PMLA*, 116.1, (January 2001), p.42.

network of living. The nation as structure of feeling can no longer contain its subjects as their geographical and cultural affiliations reach out beyond the local. However, such notions often conveniently fail to acknowledge that these affiliations invariably have their limits. Arjun Appadurai, in his influential *Modernity at Large*, argues that one key feature of globalisation is ‘the incapacity of states to prevent their minority populations from linking themselves to wider constituencies of religious or ethnic affiliation’¹⁹. But whilst such affiliations clearly serve to challenge national boundaries, can they really be taken as proof of a new kind of transnational consciousness? Religious or ethnic affiliations may well transcend borders but – as the experience of the first decade of the twenty first century seems to suggest – they are arguably as exclusive and as exclusionary as the nations they purport to leave behind, and often just as belligerent. The novels examined in this thesis explore the extent to which cosmopolitanism challenges the nation state and notions of national subjectivity but they also challenge suggestions of the death of the nation, suggesting that whilst it may at times be true to say that ‘[c]ulture is now being defined in terms less of national interests than of a shared set of global ones’²⁰ these same national interests can often be seen to return to haunt the narrative of cosmopolitanism. It is perhaps more apt to see cosmopolitan theory, as Katherine Stanton does, not as a rejection of the nation as ‘a viable category of literary analysis (or lived experience)’²¹ but rather as an approach which ‘make[s] the nation the contested subject rather than the confirmed fact’²². In this way we ‘mediate[...] between interpretative strategies

¹⁹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.22.

²⁰ Jay, p.32.

²¹ Katherine Stanton, *Cosmopolitan Fictions: Ethics, Politics and Global Change in the Work of Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Jamaica Kincaid and J.M. Coetzee* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.2.

²² Stanton, p.2.

that abjure political and geographical distinctions and those that try to preserve them²³.

Just such a 'contested-nation' approach is identified by Homi K. Bhabha who sees in the tension between the pedagogical bonds of nation and the performative space of cosmopolitanism the potential for resistance and agency. For Bhabha, traditional narratives of national identity are based upon a linear, homogeneous past which supposes some kind of point of origin. However, such narratives are constantly haunted by that which they exclude:

The linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes, most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity. However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the "nation" as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or "cultural difference" in the act of writing the nation.²⁴

The nation as narrative splits apart, menaced by its margins, its excess, its others. This split displays what Bhabha terms 'the liminality of cultural modernity.'²⁵ The nation must be thought of in terms of a dual temporality, a 'double narrative movement':

[T]he nation's people must be thought of in double-time; the people are the historical "objects" of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the "subjects" of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process.

[...]

In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*.²⁶

Bhabha, then, draws attention to the temporal ambiguity which lies at the heart of nationhood, the split which means that the nation must simultaneously be new,

²³ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 40.3 (Summer 2007), p.218.

²⁴ Homi. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.140.

²⁵ Bhabha, *Location*, p.140.

²⁶ Bhabha, *Location*, pp.145-146.

current, evolving, and yet emerge out of a haloed past and project forward into an equally certain future. It is not simply a case of rejecting the linear progress of the nation through history. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen numerous examples of oppressed peoples rallying around a common national bond, from the citizens of Eastern Europe who broke free of Soviet communist control to the peoples of East Timor, the setting for Timothy Mo's *The Redundancy of Courage*, whose national identity provided a focal point for the long and bloody battle against Indonesian colonisation. The pedagogical and the performative must necessarily always go together. Rather, Bhabha invites us to recognise the strange temporality of the nation, the combination of tradition and change, certainty and anxiety. Part of my task, then, shall be to seek out that strange temporality in my analysis of the novels of Ishiguro and Mo which follows.

In fact, the contemporary novel presents an ideal platform for exploring this strange temporality of nationhood. Critics have long acknowledged the way in which the novel form developed in large part due to its ability to frame and explore the emerging notions of nation and national identity in the eighteenth century and, as Schoene observes, '[h]ighly sensitive to historical and socio-economic shifts in polarity and perspective, literature is equipped with a unique pioneering capacity for envisioning the world'²⁷. In addition, Bhabha's reference to 'writing the nation' draws attention to the role that narrative discourse plays in the formation of national identity. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities*, which considers the nation as 'an imagined political community' which is 'conceived as a

²⁷ Schoene, p.25.

deep, horizontal comradeship’²⁸, Bhabha suggests that ‘continuist’ national narratives are undermined by their inability to fix the identity of the people in time or place. Such narratives are totalising, ‘exclud[ing], or marginalis[ing], those parts of the nation that are not deemed representative of its total essence’²⁹. However, these excluded or marginal voices emerge to challenge the pre-given, linear and allegedly ‘natural’ progress of the nation from the past to the present and into the future. This emergence of a new counter-narrative is resolutely temporal, the homogeneous time of the nation displaced by ‘double-time which reflects the disjunction between historical explanation of a nation and its living present’³⁰. Significantly, this ‘double-time’ in the narration of nationhood is mirrored in the double-time of the novels considered here, whose narratives tread a similar path between explaining the past and reflecting the present. Of course, this may be true of a great many texts but it does seem nevertheless to be a particularly distinctive feature of the type of novel considered in this thesis.

Cosmopolitanism’s challenge to national identity and nationhood occurs as a result of the altered experience of time in the modern world, in the breakdown of the pedagogical linearity of the temporal. The question of whether this opens up an “‘in-between” space ... [which] provides the terrain for establishing strategies of collaboration and contestation’³¹ as Bhabha suggests or whether we take Schoene’s view that ‘more often than not, what opens up is a perilous rift or gap, an ou-topia or “non-place”, rather than a comfortably inhabitable “Third Space” enabling mutual

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp.6-7.

²⁹ Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 91-92.

³⁰ Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p.93.

³¹ Bhabha, *Location*, pp.1-2.

encounter'³², will be one of the concerns of my analysis of the individual novels which follow. I will suggest that cosmopolitan thinking falls too often into the trap simply of celebrating any kind of cross-cultural contact as positive and liberating when, in fact, we must be more sensitive to the possibility that hybridity can be a difficult, violent and troubled process of contact and negotiation.

One of the key concerns of the cosmopolitan novel, then, is the flow of culture, people, products and ideas beyond national borders. Schoene is typical of cosmopolitan theorists in suggesting that '[c]entral to the cosmopolitan novel is its representation of worldwide human living and global community'³³. But what do we mean by 'worldwide human living' and 'global community'? What is there to link the experiences of the citizens of London, New York or Tokyo with those of the Philippines, China or Cuba (each of which locations will be encountered in the novels which follow)? We should be cautious of any attempt to homogenise peoples and cultures into one transnational populace – as has already been suggested, the spread of cosmopolitanism and globalisation is fundamentally uneven. Instead, as Katherine Stanton suggests, '[r]ather than world citizenship, cosmopolitanism now indicates a multiplicity or diversity of belongings – some carefully cultivated, others reluctantly assumed'³⁴. Something of this unevenness and diversity of experience is also suggested by Timothy Brennan in his claim that:

the term [cosmopolitanism] has become less an analytical category than a normative projection, complementing at once celebratory claims and despairing recognitions: the death of the nation-state, transculturation (rather than a merely one-sided assimilation), cultural hybridity (rather than a simplistic contrast between the foreign and the indigenous), and postmodernity (as the view that consumption is politically exciting, viable, and wholly ones own).³⁵

³² Schoene, p.4.

³³ Schoene, p.17.

³⁴ Stanton, p.2.

³⁵ Brennan, pp.1-2.

The cosmopolitan novel, then, if it is to reflect and indeed constitute this world, must interrogate notions of identity and belonging, exploring the ways that cross-cultural contact leads to new hybrid notions of subjectivity and agency. But the definitions offered by Stanton and Brennan's suggest that there are two sides to this cosmopolitanism. It is this Janus-faced representation of the period, this combination of 'celebration' and 'despair', of belongings both 'carefully cultivated' and 'reluctantly assumed' which I wish to pick out in the fiction of Ishiguro and Mo.

As I have already suggested, for me the key to unpacking these tensions lies in the temporal features of cosmopolitanism, and in the corresponding temporal structures of the narratives of cosmopolitanism. I would like to take some time, therefore, to examine in more detail some of the key features and concerns of cosmopolitan literature, with particular attention to the ways in which the cosmopolitan novel explores and represents contemporary pressures on time. I have already suggested one of these pressures, that of the tension at the heart of the cosmopolitan novel between performative transnational modes of thinking and being and the pedagogical temporality of the nation. But these novels portray the modern pressure on time in several other ways: in the ways in which they explore questions of ethics and agency in times of global historical crisis and conflict; in their representations of the conflict between the private and the social; and in their representation of the nature of travel and mobility in the contemporary world. I will examine each of these elements in turn but first I would like to examine more broadly some of the temporal features of the cosmopolitan world.

Modern time is paradoxical. Advances in science and technology have saved time in almost every area of human life, from the professional to the domestic to travel, yet the experience of the contemporary world is often one of harriedness, of stress, of having only a deficit of time. Mark Currie is one of the many critics who have identified the way in which ‘the historical present [is marked by] a new experience...which is produced by social and technological change’³⁶. As my analysis of the novels in this thesis will show, both Mo and Ishiguro are concerned with this new experience of time both in terms of their representations of these aspects of technological and social change and in their very narrative structures. In particular, their temporal structures explore the tension between the historical and the present in an age which claims, as the quotation from Ishiguro with which I began this discussion suggests, that history is at an end. Jameson suggests that to attempt to understand or theorise the contemporary period is to recognise this crisis of historicity, to ‘attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place’³⁷. Jameson sees present in modern society something of Jacques Lacan’s notion of schizophrenia in that ‘the subject has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organise its past and future into coherent experience’³⁸. This suggests a contemporary subject adrift in a series of nows, unable to apply any kind of linear temporal logic. Instead, the past is replaced by reproductions of the past, by simulacrum, by pastiche, whilst the future is already here, already gone. But just as I argue that the nation returns to haunt cosmopolitan readings of these novels, so also will I argue that the historical refuses to cede ground entirely to some kind of performative schizophrenia of the cosmopolitan present(s).

³⁶ Currie, *About Time*, p.8.

³⁷ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.ix.

³⁸ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.25.

Nowhere are concepts of nation and a sense of history more closely intertwined than in moments of global crisis. Each of the novels considered here is deeply concerned with the ways in which such moments of global historical crisis and change are narrated, and with ‘what happens when the “narratives” of globalization and chaos converge in the consciousness and habits of globalization’s beneficiaries’³⁹. But as well as being moments in which citizens rally around nationhood, international conflicts are simultaneously one of the ways in which the citizen is made to feel global, part of a larger network of existence that goes beyond national borders⁴⁰. They are also vivid examples of cosmopolitanism’s excess, where the notion of harmonic transnational coexistence comes up against the return of the repressed nation state in the face of the collapse of international order. And such crises also tend to identify cosmopolitanism’s ‘others’, measured against the ‘beneficiaries’ of globalisation identified by Bain (above): the poor, the exiled, the persecuted, the abandoned. At times of crisis, these are the marginal figures to be found at the blurred boundaries between nation and world. The question of agency and cross-cultural contact within these spaces of crisis thus becomes a central concern of the cosmopolitan novel. As Stanton argues, ‘[cosmopolitan fiction] recognize[s] that ethical and political agency overhangs those borders’⁴¹. The novels studied each explore the nature and limits of individual agency in times of historical upheaval and in doing so they interrogate the ethical balance between personal and universal responsibility. They explore the ethical dilemma of unsavoury actions taken for the ‘greater good’, and interrogate the ways in which history judges and revises such actions. And they ask to what extent if it all local, individual actions might affect or transform larger collective, international

³⁹ Alexander M. Bain, ‘International Settlements: Ishiguro, Shanghai, Humanitarianism’, *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 40.3 (Summer 2007), p.242.

⁴⁰ Bain, pp.240-264.

⁴¹ Stanton, p.3.

events, interrogating cosmopolitanism's claim that not even the smallest action occurs in isolation. They also record the difficulty of recognising the network of responsibility in which the individual operates, acknowledging the fact that '[f]or most of us..., it is extraordinarily difficult most of the time to register the existence of the global or transnational domain as a matter of personal significance'⁴². When Stevens recognises the 'repercussions of unimaginable largeness'⁴³ in his actions as butler of Darlington Hall in *The Remains of the Day*⁴⁴ he is acknowledging what each of the protagonists in these novels come to realise – that their individual and professional actions have consequences far beyond the horizon of their own social space. Indeed, each of these protagonists is deeply concerned with questions of their own historical agency. But in frequently overestimating their influence on historical events, or in coming up short of their intended goals, these protagonists also question the extent of that 'unimaginable largeness' and of their actions upon the larger world.

There is, perhaps unsurprisingly, always a temporal aspect to these questions of agency. As media and technology have advanced, so the temporal distance between different parts of the world has decreased, to the extent that images may be beamed from one side of the world to the other and experienced as almost 'live' events, whilst participation in such events is made more possible as technologies of travel 'shrink' the world and make even the most remote of locations speedily accessible. This temporal shrinking is one of the ways in which the interconnected world can be imagined, where traditional national paradigms are disrupted by a larger global perspective, as the media beam pictures of international crises, often from the other

⁴² Bruce Robbins, 'Very Busy Right Now: Globalization and Harriedness in Ishiguro's "The Unconsoled"', *Comparative Literature*, 53.4, (2001), p.428.

⁴³ Walkowitz, p.230.

⁴⁴ Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber, 1990), p.77.

side of the world, into our living rooms instantaneously, making us feel part of the events, and indeed forcing us to consider our own relation to them. Similarly, active intervention in these historical crises also takes on a temporal aspect. Intervention in such events is often characterised by a sense of time running out so that, as Bain argues, ‘humanitarian crisis fiction, like the processes and image-bank of globalization to which it is bound, depends on the compression of time into “pace”’. As in the thriller, urgency of plot is a function of the imminence of danger to those whom the [usually] Western protagonist is there to help...and usually to the protagonist, too’⁴⁵. Not only are these protagonists impelled to act in the face of historical change, they are forced to do so in haste. Their subsequent narratives, composed usually at a distance of some years or decades, then permit them to repent, or at least to reflect, at leisure. It is the gap between the two, between the time of the narrated events and the time of the narration, which allows a space for that history of intervention and agency to be reviewed, rewritten and – in many cases – refashioned.

Nor is it necessary to intervene in a global crisis in order to experience the time-bind of contemporary life. Indeed, as has already been noted, the sense of not having enough time appears to be one of the conditions of modern living. As such, the urgency with which these protagonists are forced to act upon the historical events surrounding them is mirrored in the harried domestic lives which most of them live. The pressures of time come to bear upon not only the professional sphere but that of the family as well. Bruce Robbins contends that such pressures can be incorporated into narrative structure so that ‘distortions of time and space become a metaphor for the harriedness of ordinary life, and the conflicting demands of home and work

⁴⁵ Bain, p.259.

become a metaphor for the conflicting scales and rhythms of the foreign and the domestic⁴⁶. Robbins suggests that the nation is often framed in terms of home or family, so that the alternative professional sphere might be read as standing for what lies beyond national borders – in other words, the international or the cosmopolitan⁴⁷. Thus the workplace becomes a potentially liberating space of agency, simultaneously freeing the individual from the constraints of family and from the pedagogical bounds of nationhood. Whilst it might seem intuitive to interpret the relationship of employee to employer as one of subservience and lack of agency, Robbins argues for reading professional ‘busyness’ as a form of agency and commitment to the cosmopolitan. As we have already seen, it is almost impossible for the individual to maintain a global perspective. But moments of professional harriedness are one way in which a rift can open up, as the intrusion of a working life increasingly organised – and reorganised – according to the demands of a global economy impinges upon family time and space, connecting the local with the transnational by making the larger socio-economic/cosmopolitan world visible. Thus, sacrificing the personal or the familial in the name of the professional may be read as a display of commitment to the world beyond the local. As I shall argue in my analysis of the individual texts, such a reading is contentious, and is countered by the suggestion that a commitment to (over)work may be viewed as a comforting escape from family, a privileging of the social over the domestic which leads to an abnegation of familial duty. Regardless, what each of these positions suggests is that one of the features of modern living is a deficit of time when it comes to managing the competing demands of the professional life and the personal.

⁴⁶ Robbins, p.430.

⁴⁷ Robbins, p.429.

If an increasing sense of ‘busyness’ is one of the key factors of cosmopolitan living then another, often related feature is an increased level of mobility. One of the key concerns of the cosmopolitan novel is to explore the multifarious modes of cross-border movement which cosmopolitanism and globalisation bring. As Stanton observes in her study of a number of contemporary cosmopolitan authors, such works identify and explore ‘the chosen or unchosen reasons for travel’⁴⁸. Amongst the reasons Stanton encounters are ‘professional demands, educational scholarships, familial desperation, and sexual trafficking’⁴⁹. Such a list reminds us of the point James Clifford makes more broadly when he insists we must be aware that ‘travelers move under strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions and that certain travelers are materially privileged, others oppressed’⁵⁰. Any analysis of the nature, role and extent of mobility in representations of cosmopolitanism, and any subsequent claims to agency and cross-cultural contact, must be aware of the distinctions between and within tourism, exile, migration and other causes of transit. Each of the novels examined in this thesis bears witness to the varied and often competing reasons for travelling across and beyond borders, and of the different material conditions under which that travel is undertaken.

Here again I would suggest that an understanding and analysis of the temporal conditions of mobility is both desirable and indeed important. In particular, I would suggest that these novels display in their treatment of the mobility a tension between on the one hand the sense of time as a valuable and scarce commodity and, on the other, a sense of abeyance and immobility, and that this tension to some extent

⁴⁸ Stanton, p.1.

⁴⁹ Stanton, p.1.

⁵⁰ James Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’ in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), p.108.

reflects that between the chosen and unchosen reasons for travel mentioned above. The leisurely pace of tourism encountered in *The Remains of the Day*, for example, is very different from the urgent intervention in international crisis depicted in *When We Were Orphans* or in the rootless exile at the heart of *Renegade or Halo*². Each of the novels examined here explores these different temporalities of travel, often emphasising a pressure on time which appears to be one of the ways in which the cosmopolitan novel characterises the experience of the contemporary global citizen. Juxtaposed with a sense of time as a precious commodity is a sense of a temporal deceleration, of slippage. Time runs out, but it also stands still. That is, alongside the often frantic need for travel and action is a contrasting sense of immobility and lack of agency which might be most familiar to the modern citizen in the form of the traffic jam, the delayed train, the airport transit lounge or even the impatient wait for the elevator to arrive. Modern mobility, it seems, comes with an increasing sense of going nowhere. Indeed, whilst increased mobility, whether through leisure or necessity, is one of the key features of cosmopolitanism, it is equally important to note, as Tomlinson does, that ‘paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people [...] is that of staying in one place but experiencing the “displacement” that global modernity *brings to them*’⁵¹.

The nature and extent of mobility explored in these novels, along with the varied reasons for that mobility will, then, be one of the key concerns of the analysis which follows, along with a consideration of the way in which such narratives explore the ‘busyness’ of modern life and the conflict between the personal and the social. In addition, I will seek to trace the ways in which cosmopolitanism narrates itself, and

⁵¹ John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p.9.

outline the tensions this raises with notions of nationhood. These tensions often emerge through the flashpoints of historical crisis which these novels return to time and again, raising questions of ethical behaviour and individual agency in the face of larger historical forces. The first such crisis is considered in Chapter One, when I turn my attention to Kazuo Ishiguro's first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills*⁵² and *An Artist of the Floating World*⁵³. Both of these novels take as their point of historical upheaval the Japanese experience of the Second World War but both also allude to the Japan of the 1980s, which might be viewed as the prototype of the global economic power. Drawing upon Gérard Genette's theory of narrative level, I will suggest that Ishiguro's favoured structure of one tale embedded within another creates the temporal conditions by which the performative space of the cosmopolitan present(s) might be undermined by the return of the historical nation. In *A Pale View of Hills*, that structure moves the narrative between the peaceful English countryside in the 1970s, from where Etsuko narrates her tale, and the bleak, stagnant landscape of postwar Nagasaki. I read Etsuko's narrative as one of exile, placing her within the great body of the displaced of modern society. Her displacement comes in the aftermath of that horrific application of modern technology, the dropping of the atom bomb, itself signalling the onset of a new temporality, a new 'modern' age. Although barely mentioned in her narrative, the bomb permeates every page, particularly in the embedded tale set in Nagasaki shortly after that fateful day. My analysis will examine the ways in which the repressed memories of that event are brought to the surface through Ishiguro's manipulation of narrative structure and intertextual references. In particular, I will examine the way in which Etsuko's narrative is rendered unreliable by the temporal divide between the events and the act of narrating them, raising

⁵² Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (London: Faber, 1991).

⁵³ Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London: Faber, 2001).

questions of exactly whom her story is directed towards and leaving her narrative rootless and adrift. I will also examine the novel's treatment of historical agency and ethical intervention, played out in the sub-plot between Etsuko's husband Jiro and his father, Ogata-san.

The generational divide which that sub-plot both highlights and interrogates becomes the principal narrative thread of Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*. I will examine the familial conflict which lies at the heart of the narrator Ono's identity as an artist, and trace the development of his career both in terms of cosmopolitan mobility and in terms of the busyness of modern professional life. I will also explore the way in which the narrative structure once again mediates between the novel's different time-frames in order to force the narrator to confront the ethical questions surrounding his involvement in pre-war Japanese militarisation. In drawing the two novels back together, I will attempt to conclude that whilst both are in some ways representative of the outward looking economic and social development of Japan of the 1980s (despite their historical settings), both also illustrate the way in which the bonds of nation and tradition return to inform and undermine that sense of post-war change and internationalisation. Most of all, however, they suggest that such change as there is acts to exclude the older generation from its processes and benefits. As such, I read both novels as being framed by a temporal structure which renders their protagonists 'out of time'.

In Chapter Two, I turn my attention to two more Ishiguro novels, *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*⁵⁴. These novels again focus upon the upheaval of

⁵⁴ Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (London: Faber, 2001).

the Second World War, tracing the effects of that conflict upon the contemporary world but here the perspective shifts from post-war Japan to Britain's post-imperial decline. Both novels also draw upon the cosmopolitan tropes of mobility and crisis intervention, so that each is characterised by a sense that 'time runs out'. Each also engages in what Jameson describes as 'the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche'⁵⁵. Arguing somewhat against Jameson's notion of pastiche as 'a neutral practice of...mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse...blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs'⁵⁶, I shall suggest that these two novels' adoption of the travel and detective genres respectively serve as a means of handling the complex temporal relations within the narratives and thus allow a platform for the narrators to engage in the processes of reflection and moral self-examination. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' apparently leisurely journey around the south of England is undermined by his discomfort in the role of tourist. The slow pace of the vacation gives way to a doomed race against time to put right the romance he sacrificed in the face of professional demands. These professional demands are recalled during the course of his trip, in a series of analeptic episodes which reveal the narrator's minor role in the British appeasement movement of the inter-war years. Arguing against Bruce Robbins' reading of the novel as a celebration of cosmopolitan agency and busyness, I will suggest that the novel's complex temporal layering leaves the ethical question of Stevens's intervention in history unresolved. I will also examine the way in which Stevens's process of self-reflection and identification is mirrored in the novel by its reappraisal of Britain's national identity in the 1980s, with particular reference to the novel's unspoken background of the Suez Crisis of 1956. Again, I will suggest that the novel balances a sense of

⁵⁵ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.16.

⁵⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.17.

cosmopolitanism with a recognition that the post-imperial nation still exists as a strong structure of feeling and identification.

That tension between cosmopolitanism and national identity is also of concern in *When We Were Orphans*. The sedate pace of the first half of the novel gives way to a frantic race against time in the second as the novel's detective-narrator, Christopher Banks, is transplanted into the heart of the Sino-Japanese conflict in Shanghai in 1937. Like Stevens's reluctant tourist, Banks finds himself far removed from his professional comfort zone, and his increasing sense of alienation and confusion is reflected in the novel's descent from relative realism into a surreal dreamscape. Banks's direct intervention in an international crisis brings him into contact with the unevenness of cosmopolitanism. I will examine the ways in which the Shanghai of the novel, and in particular the International Settlement, occupies two temporal spaces, sixty years apart and acts as a site of negotiation between cosmopolitanism and the nation, suggesting that it is as much 'ou-topia' as 'third space'. I will also examine the ways in which Banks's conflation of the social and the private raises questions about the transformative power of local action and the ethical implications of agency in the face of historical crisis.

The remainder of my thesis will focus on four novels by Timothy Mo. Both *An Insular Possession*⁵⁷ and *The Redundancy of Courage*⁵⁸ are concerned with the formation and defence of individual nations in the face of outside or international pressures. As such, I frame my discussion of these two novels in terms of 'time and nation'. In Chapter Three, I will read *An Insular Possession* both as an historical

⁵⁷ Timothy Mo, *An Insular Possession* (London: Paddleless Press, 2002).

⁵⁸ Timothy Mo, *The Redundancy of Courage* (London: Paddleless Press, 2002).

novel concerned with the establishment of Hong Kong as a British territory in the 1800s and as a contemporary cosmopolitan novel which looks forward to the then imminent return of that territory to Chinese sovereignty. I will suggest that reading the narrative of the founding of the prototypical global economic powerhouse of Hong Kong in the knowledge of its impending repatriation to the then still insular nation state of China challenges the contemporary narrative of cosmopolitanism, although that challenge is itself undermined by present day readings of the novel, undertaken in the knowledge of China's increasingly global role. Something of this ambiguity will be identified in the novel's treatment of time which counterpoints the rapid advancement of technology, particularly the technologies of travel and media, with a languid sense of isolation in which the present itself becomes stretched or distended. Finally, I shall suggest that the cosmopolitan narrative is further undermined by the novel's depiction of the sheer incommensurability of the opposing races, despite the best efforts of the novel's liberal protagonists, and that this incommensurability mirrors some of the tensions present in the period of the novel's composition.

In Chapter Three I will also consider *The Redundancy of Courage*, Mo's fictional retelling of the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor. I shall examine the novel's central conflict between the formation and defence of a sovereign nation and the internationally (if unofficially) sanctioned consumption of that nation into a larger network of existence. Whilst acknowledging the narrative's very clear depiction of the artificiality of the construct of nation, I shall suggest that the resistance towards occupation and the heroic actions of the novel's protagonists suggest a model of ethical agency *against* transnational interference and *for* the sovereignty of nationhood. But I will also identify as problematic the narrative voice of Adolph Ng,

drawing particular attention to his use of prolepsis as an anticipatory mode of narration which ultimately reveals that narrative's temporal and spatial rootlessness. Finally, I will suggest that – as was the case with *An Insular Possession* – present day readings of the novel problematise any cosmopolitan reading by bringing with them knowledge of what happened *after* Ng's narrative ends; that is, a present day reader approaches the novel armed with the knowledge, unavailable to Mo at the time of writing, that East Timor would indeed eventually win its independence. The survival of the tiny nation, now named Timor-Leste, in the face of such vast global forces, testifies to the enduring and abiding bond of nation despite the apparent loosening of national paradigms in the contemporary period.

Chapter Four will examine Mo's two most recent publications, each of which I read as being concerned with the relationship between spatial concerns of modern living and what I term 'cosmopolitan time'. Both *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*⁵⁹ and *Renegade or Halo*⁶⁰ were self published under Mo's own Paddleless Press imprint. In this chapter I read Mo's decision to self publish as a reaction to the increasingly globalised nature of the publishing industry, situating his independent stand as an act of resistance to the increasing homogenisation of that industry. Something of the clash of ideologies finds its way into the narrative structure of the novels. The main narrative in *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* is divided into two parts which, following Elaine Yee Lin Ho, I read as 'a dialogue of antithetical terms [particularly] local versus foreign'⁶¹. The foreign arrives in the latter half of the novel in the form of an academic conference, the narrative strategy of the novel - with its third person narrator and its refusal to fix on one single protagonist – emphasising the sometimes

⁵⁹ Timothy Mo, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* (London: Paddleless Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Timothy Mo, *Renegade or Halo*² (London: Paddleless Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Elaine Yee Lin Ho, *Timothy Mo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.115.

bewildering clash of cultures at this particular border site. I will trace the novel's debate between the sense of ambition, development and enterprise at the margins and the sense of helplessness in the face of the economic advance of multinationalism, and will assess the significance of the proleptic Epilogue, which carries the reader several decades into the future.

In *Renegade or Halo*² Mo directly confronts the ills of globalisation, tracing the (mis)fortunes of the global underclass through the perspective of his first-person narrator, the flamboyant Ray Archimedes Blondel Castro, himself the product of cross cultural contact between East and West, in this case an American GI and a Filipino hostess. More than any other novel studied here, *Renegade* provides a snapshot of the cosmopolitan world at the turn of the century. A classically marginal hero, without a stake in the society, Castro emerges as a free-thinking agent largely through the distinctive voice which carries him through the novel's picaresque tour of the alternative 'hot-spots' of the globalised world, those of the migrant worker – Hong Kong, the Gulf, Cuba, and back to the Philippines. Castro's journey is perhaps the perfect example of the mobility of contemporary life, taking him literally around the world but, as I shall argue, his status as human cargo and the factors compelling him to make that journey point to the 'unchosen' reasons for travel elucidated by Stanton (above).

The various reasons for the travel undertaken by the characters in the novels of Ishiguro and Mo, and the ways in which these transits are undertaken, will be just one of the strands that I seek to draw together in this thesis. As well as considering the reasons for and nature of these journeys, I will consider the temporal pressures under

which these journeys occur and attempt to trace the various cross-cultural contacts which takes place as a result. I will also trace the ways in which these novels explore the temporality of modern life, suggesting the pressure upon time and the sacrifice of the private to professional demands as one of the ‘seeds of things that didn’t go so well’, to return to Ishiguro’s words at the start of this introduction. And I will attempt to show the ways in which each of the novels considered, in their very narrative structures and in particular in their treatment of history and time, makes the case for the durability of nation in the face of globalisation. These tensions begin to emerge in Ishiguro’s first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, to which I now turn.

Chapter 1

Out of Time: *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*

Introduction

In July 2007, *The Guardian* newspaper reported on an attempt by the Japanese government to remove from school textbooks a controversial episode from that country's recent history⁶². According to the article, the attempts to 'airbrush' from the records the episode from the Second World War - whereby the islanders of Okinawa were each supplied with two grenades and ordered to use the first to attack American troops invading the island and the second to commit suicide, an order which hundreds of residents obeyed – form part of a larger revisionist approach to Japan's modern history, and to the war in particular. Such moves reflect the growing desire among some Japanese 'to rectify Japan's "masochistic" view of its own history'⁶³, a process which involves the questioning of 'official' accounts of episodes from that time such as the Okinawa suicides, the rehabilitation of discredited public figures such as executed wartime prime minister Yuko Tojo, and the general re-evaluation of the way in which the Japanese reflect upon that period in their country's history. The desire to 'rectify' such histories also suggests a reaction of sorts to the country's post-war experience, one which has seen Japan develop – under America's influence – first into a model of capitalism and, latterly, into a key player in the increasing globalisation of economic and cultural forces.

Similar issues surrounding the ways in which Japan remembers its recent past, and the questions of shame, blame and historical agency which arise out of such recollections,

⁶² Justin McCurry, 'Told to commit suicide, survivors now face elimination from history', *Guardian*, 6 July 2007, p.25.

⁶³ McCurry, p.25.

inform Kazuo Ishiguro's first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills*⁶⁴ and *An Artist of the Floating World*⁶⁵. These novels explore such matters against the largely unspoken background of the atomic bombs which devastated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the rather more overt Japanese surrender to the Americans and subsequent years of American occupation which followed these attacks. The novels examine the effect that such historical moments wreak upon the ordinary individual, and question the roles and responsibilities which befall such individuals against the grand sweep of history. But they also widen their scope in order to explore the conflict between a commitment to one's professional life and one's duty towards family, a conflict which begins to emerge under the influence of the Americans and which foreshadows the increasing demands of the professional which emerge as a characteristic of contemporary cosmopolitan life towards the end of the century.

In this chapter, I will suggest that the narratives of the two novels' principal protagonists - Etsuko and Ono - are in general characterised by a sense that they and their generation are 'out of time'. Whilst their recollections suggest a degree of agency and busyness in the past, particularly in the case of Ono, both appear to be excluded from the brave new world which the younger generation are carving out for Japan after the war. In this chapter I will examine the ways in which Ishiguro's carefully crafted narrative structure reveals this generational conflict as well as highlighting the alienation that the older generation experience in the post-war world. But I shall also suggest that the narratives of Etsuko and Ono do much to undermine

⁶⁴ Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (London: Faber, 1982). **All further page references from this edition.**

⁶⁵ Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London: Faber, 1986). **All further page references from this edition.**

the narrative of the new Japan and, by extension, that of the contemporary cosmopolitan world.

A Pale View of Hills

In the introduction to *Writing Ground Zero*, his examination of Japanese literary treatments of the atomic bomb, John Whittier Treat writes:

Since the destruction of two cities through the use of nuclear weapons in August 1945, some of us have the memory – and the rest of us, our imagination of that memory – of how the world may end.⁶⁶

Kazuo Ishiguro's first novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, is deeply concerned with the memory of one of these nuclear weapons, the second bomb, which fell upon the city of Nagasaki on the 9 August, 1945. Although from Nagasaki, Ishiguro was born in 1954, and must therefore be content with his 'imagination of that memory'. Etsuko, the protagonist of his novel, on the other hand, is a *hibakusha*, a victim of the atomic bomb (albeit a fictional one). Thus Ishiguro manages, in a sense, to occupy both of the positions outlined by Treat. In *Pale View*, Ishiguro carefully constructs a framework of narrative levels, analeptic episodes and intertextual references which allows him to explore such memories – imagined or otherwise - of the Nagasaki bomb, and the legacy it wreaked upon those caught up in its aftermath. But the novel also looks forward from that point, locating in the ashes of the bomb's physical and emotional devastation the roots of the economic miracle which, by the time of the novel's publication, had transformed Japan into a global economic force, and hinting at the durability of the past and the return of the repressed 'old' Japan to haunt and undermine that modern, global outlook.

⁶⁶ John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.1.

My analysis of *Pale View* will begin with an examination of the novel's narrative structure. In particular, I shall focus on the way in which Etsuko's primary narrative, set in 1970s England, leads her to recall the events of the secondary narrative, some quarter of a century earlier. I shall suggest that this time gap – common to each of the novels by Ishiguro examined in this thesis – is significant in allowing the novel's themes to rise to the surface. One of these themes is the emergence of the United States of America as a post-war power. In particular the novel foregrounds the enthusiastic adoption of American work practices by the defeated Japanese which in turn suggests a more contemporary relevance to the narrative. Meanwhile, these new practices highlight the emerging generational conflict which is, again, a common feature of Ishiguro's novels. In *Pale View*, this conflict is played out in the novel's 'Ogata-San' sub-plot, which I examine in detail. Finally, I shall turn to the novel's frequent use of ghost and suicide motifs, suggesting that they figure the unspoken but insidious presence of the atomic bomb in the novel. Coming full circle, I shall suggest that since these motifs are prominent in both the primary *and* secondary narratives, their metaphorical significance extends beyond the time of the secondary narrative, 1950s Nagasaki, to take in also the 1980s of the novel's publication.

Narrative Structure

Although *A Pale View of Hills* takes as its principal historical setting a Nagasaki attempting to come to terms with the legacy of the atomic bomb, the novel is actually narrated from England. *Pale View* is narrated by Etsuko, who left Nagasaki for rural England with her now-deceased second husband, the Englishman Sheringham. The novel is framed by a visit paid to Etsuko by her second daughter, Niki, who now lives in London. Her visit triggers in Etsuko a mood of reflection, as she recalls the recent suicide of her first daughter (and Niki's estranged half-sister), the Japanese-born

Keiko, who had been left discomfited by her physical displacement from Japan to England. Embedded within this primary narrative is a second tale, as Etsuko recalls a hot summer in Nagasaki, shortly after the Second World War, when she was pregnant with Keiko. In this segment of the narrative, Etsuko reflects on the short friendship she enjoyed that summer with the mysterious newcomer Sachiko, and with Sachiko's daughter, the troubled, haunted Mariko. But the larger context of this secondary narrative, which takes in the legacy of the bomb and the American-led regeneration of Japan and its economy, suggests that the narrative in fact spreads beyond its dual moments in time and space in order to also take in a view of the world at the time of the novel's publication.

It is worthwhile pausing for a moment to explore this layered structure in a little more detail, since it is one which – in one way or another – is common to each of the Ishiguro novels considered here. At the heart of that structure is a careful manipulation of narrative levels, so that the narrator's memories are always buried within an outer narrative which is set in the novel's 'present'. Gérard Genette identifies the different narrative levels possible within a text, and the ways in which these levels may be manipulated, so that '[s]uch narratives within narratives create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within which it is embedded'⁶⁷. The highest level of narrative identified by Genette is the *extradiegetic level*; 'a (literary) act carried out at a first level'⁶⁸. This level represents the act of narration itself, reflecting the temporal position of the narrator, outside or above the narrative itself. At one remove from the *extradiegetic* is the

⁶⁷ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983), p.91.

⁶⁸ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.228.

diegetic (or *intradiegetic*) *level*, representing the events of the primary narrative themselves⁶⁹. The third, *metadiegetic* or *hypodiegetic*, level describes the secondary narrative which is, of course, embedded within the primary narrative⁷⁰. Obviously, the potential exists for this structure to continue *ad infinitum*, with narrative-embedded-within-narrative-embedded-within-narrative and so on.

Genette's model can quite easily be grafted onto a reading of *Pale View*. Although she is also a character in the tale she tells, Etsuko narrates the novel at the *extradiegetic level*, since her act of narration occurs after both the Nagasaki episode and Niki's visit to Etsuko in England⁷¹. The primary narrative, that is the frame story of Niki's visit, is then narrated at the *intradiegetic level* and the embedded Nagasaki episodes at the *metadiegetic* level. Of course, the identification of any such structure in *Pale View* and other Ishiguro novels begs the question: why does Ishiguro choose to construct the narrative in such a manner? Genette proposes three 'types of relationships that can connect the *metadiegetic* [or secondary] narrative to the first [primary] narrative, into which it is inserted'⁷². The first of these relationships is causal, whereby the embedded narrative might typically be in the form of an analeptic episode which sheds some light upon how the situation represented in the primary narrative arose. The second relationship is thematic, suggesting that there is 'no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis'⁷³. This thematic relationship can, in turn, serve either to tie the events from the two narrative levels together or to

⁶⁹ Genette, p.228.

⁷⁰ Genette, p.228.

⁷¹ Rimmon-Kenan, pp.94-96 The actual example Rimmon-Kenan cites is that of Pip, narrator of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, who although a character in the story, 'is a higher narratorial authority in relation to the story which he narrates' (p.95) and is therefore, like Etsuko in *Pale View*, an *extradiegetic/homodiegetic* narrator.

⁷² Genette, p.232.

⁷³ Genette, p.233.

emphasise their disconnection. The third and final mode identified by Genette is that in which there is no relationship, causal or thematic, between the two levels⁷⁴. Whilst Genette offers these different selections as three distinct categories, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Rimmon-Kenan notes; ‘these functions are sometimes presented separately, sometimes in combination’⁷⁵.

We might employ Genette’s typology to explore the function of the secondary narrative in *Pale View*. Interestingly, whereas in future novels Ishiguro will use the embedded tale to reveal the source of anxiety behind his protagonists’ fretful narratives, positioning them, largely, within the first of Genette’s categories, that of the causal (although the thematic relationship is also in operation), in *Pale View* the narrative levels operate slightly differently. Not only do we discover in the outer narrative that Etsuko’s feelings of guilt relate to her perceived role in Keiko’s suicide (‘I knew all along. I knew all along she wouldn’t be happy over here. But I decided to bring her just the same’ - p.176), the subject of Keiko’s death, and the tensions it has caused, is revealed in the opening pages of the novel. As such, we need not look inside the embedded story, as is usually the case in Ishiguro’s novels, in order to solve the primary narrative’s riddle. Thus, the relationship between the levels in *Pale View* appears to fall more conveniently into the second of Genette’s categories, that of the thematic, although again it is important to note that the embedded narrative also plays, to some extent, an explicative role.

⁷⁴ The example Genette cites to illustrate this third mode is that of the *Thousand and One Nights*, where Scheherazade must continue to insert metadiegetic/secondary narratives in order to save her own life in the primary narrative. Genette p.233.

⁷⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, p.92.

Whilst Ishiguro's employment of different narrative levels conforms to Genette's model, there is a further temporal dimension to his narratives. In each of the four Ishiguro novels considered in this thesis, the author chooses to locate the primary narrative some twenty to thirty years after the time of the secondary narrative. The choice is deliberate. For one, the gap is roughly equivalent to a generation. As I shall discuss in my analysis of each novel, conflict between fathers and sons in particular, but also more generally, between the pre- and post-war generations is an important trope for Ishiguro, and one which takes on a larger metaphorical significance in his work. The temporal gap between primary and secondary narrative serves to emphasise this generational conflict. Furthermore, the space of two or three decades between narrative levels falls comfortably into the category of living memory, enabling Ishiguro to explore moments of historical transition and the ways in which they affect ordinary individuals and, significantly, given Ishiguro's preference for the first-person narrative, allowing his narrators to reflect upon, rearrange, and mis-remember the histories which they narrate.

Etsuko is the first of Ishiguro's trademark unreliable narrators. The pages of *Pale View* are replete with phrases which point to the fragility of her narrative. As she recalls the events of that post-war summer in Nagasaki, it becomes clear that Etsuko mixes up episodes, sometimes displacing personal experiences onto Sachiko. For example, towards the beginning of the novel, Etsuko overhears two women complaining about the unfriendly newcomer Sachiko. Yet moments later Etsuko appears to suggest that *she* is the newcomer when she comments 'It was never my intention to appear unfriendly, but it was probably true that I made no special effort to seem otherwise. For at that point in my life, I was still wishing to be left alone' (p.13).

An even more telling displacement occurs towards the novel's end, when Etsuko confronts Sachiko's daughter, Mariko, over the latter's reluctance to leave for a new life in America. She reassures Mariko with the promise 'if you don't like it over there, *we* can always come back' (p.173 – my emphasis). She continues 'If you don't like it over there, *we'll* come straight back. But *we* have to try it and see if *we* like it there. I'm sure *we* will' (p.173 – my emphases). As Barry Lewis observes, '[t]he change of pronoun suggests a displacement of the relation between Etsuko and Keiko on to that of Sachiko and Mariko'⁷⁶. Mariko's reluctance to relocate from Japan also appears to echo the ultimately tragic failure of Keiko to settle in England. Such apparent slippages infer that Etsuko mistakenly attributes to Sachiko and Mariko experiences which are actually endured by herself and those around her and, indeed, cast doubt over the very existence of Sachiko and her daughter. Ishiguro leaves the matter unresolved – the embedded story of Sachiko and Mariko ends abruptly, without reaching any kind of recognisable conclusion. Nevertheless, the slips and contradictions contained within Etsuko's recollections alert the reader to the fact that she is an emotionally scarred character whose narrative is to be approached with caution.

Etsuko's narrative, then, is problematic in terms of her emotional and historical reliability. But to whom is that narrative addressed? Genette suggests that when considering narrative voice, it is equally important to consider the position inside the narrative of the listener, that is, the position of the narratee. Importantly, the narratee should not to be conflated with the reader, any more than the narrator should be confused with the author. Rather, as Gerald Prince explains, 'if there is at least one

⁷⁶ Barry Lewis, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.34.

narrator in any narrative, there also is at least one narratee'⁷⁷. The narratee, then, is present within the narrative, whereas the reader stands outside the text. Indeed, Genette goes further – 'like the narrator, the narratee is one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he does not merge a priori with the reader ... any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author'⁷⁸.

Whilst Genette reveals that there is always a narratee within any narrative, this figure will often remain unobtrusive and will thus go largely unnoticed by the reader. Not so in the novels of Ishiguro, where the narratee is generally more prominent and, as a result, worthy of identification. Whilst the narratee is generally more difficult to identify and define than the narrator, careful analysis of the text will reveal what Prince calls 'signs'⁷⁹ as to their character and identity. In the case of *Pale View*, for example, our attention might be drawn to the fact that the narrator, Etsuko, goes to quite some length to describe certain areas of Nagasaki. For example, near the beginning of the novel she describes the area where she and her husband, Jiro, stayed immediately after the war: 'My husband and I lived in an area to the east of the city, a short tram journey from the centre of town. A river ran near us, and...before the war a small village had grown up on the riverbank' (p.11). Clearly, were Etsuko's listener also from Nagasaki there would be no need for her to describe the area in such detail – she would simply need to name the area, or the village on the riverbank, to alert the narratee to the particular location of her home. The detail with which she describes this and other locations throughout the novel alerts us to the fact that her listener is no more familiar with Nagasaki than the majority of the novel's readers. This appears to

⁷⁷ Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton, 1982), p.16.

⁷⁸ Genette, p.259.

⁷⁹ Prince, *Narratology*, p.17.

be confirmed later in the novel, as Etsuko describes coming across a traditional Japanese street stall: ‘Since it was never my habit to indulge in *kujibiki* and since it has no equivalents here in England – except perhaps in fairgrounds – I might well have forgotten the existence of such a thing were it not for my memory of that particular evening’ (p.120). Aside from reminding us of the unreliable nature of her recollections (‘I might well have forgotten’), the use of the phrase ‘here in England’, along with the apparent assumption that her listener is familiar with the type of attraction found in fairgrounds, reinforces the suggestion that Etsuko’s narratee is not Japanese at all, but rather English whilst also reminding us of the spatial *and* temporal distance between Etsuko and the events she narrates. This unfamiliarity with Japan on the part of her listener and her safe distance from the events allows Etsuko to manipulate and mis-remember her own past in Nagasaki, free from the threat of contradiction or challenge.

In fact, Etsuko’s narrative is somewhat less direct, somewhat less pleading, than those of subsequent Ishiguro narrators. Ishiguro’s later narrators, most notably Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* and Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, are motivated, in part at least, by a strong sense of guilt borne out of their betrayal of other parties in the name of some prevailing ideological position. As a result, their narratives are characterised by a keen need to justify these actions to both themselves and their narratees at a point in time when the ideology upon which their past actions are based has already been discredited. As we have already seen, whilst Etsuko’s narrative is borne out of a sense of having betrayed Keiko, she makes little attempt to hide the source of this personal guilt, unlike the narrators who follow. Whilst her narrative does ultimately unravel, just as do those of her successors, the motivation behind that

narrative is distinctly different, and it is this difference which accounts for, in part at least, the less persuasive tone compared to the novels which follow. Instead, the burden of guilt which characterises the narratives of later Ishiguro narrators falls, in *Pale View*, upon one of the novel's minor characters, Ogata-San. It is through the sub-plot involving this character that Ishiguro introduces both the notion of generational conflict and the underlying root of that conflict: the increasing influence of American politics and culture upon the younger generations in post-war Japan.

America and the 'new' Japan

That American influence permeates the pages of the novel. Indeed, Etsuko's opening description of Nagasaki provides a suitable example:

The worst days were over by then. American soldiers were as numerous as ever- for there was fighting in Korea – but in Nagasaki, after what had gone before, those were days of calm and relief. The world had a feeling of change about it (p.11).

The passage is interesting on a number of levels. The somewhat vague references to the 'worst days' being over, and to 'what had gone before' hint at the repression that characterises both Etsuko's own narrative and the general handling of the novel's historical theme, to the fact that memories of the bomb lie buried deep in the unconscious of both Etsuko and the novel itself. Meanwhile, the sense of calm and relief that these dark days are over is somewhat contingent, undermined by 'an unmistakable air of transience ..., as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better'(p.12). The apparently contradictory rhythms of change and stagnation will emerge time and again in my analysis of the novels both of Ishiguro and of Mo, and I shall argue later that this dual-temporality speaks something of the experience of modern life. Returning to the passage, the reference to the Korean War allows us to date the summer of the secondary narrative to sometime between 1950 and 1953, whilst the reference to American troops and to a mood of change hints at

one of the larger themes of the novel, revealed largely through the Ogata-San subplot, to which I will now turn.

Just as the novel as a whole is framed by Niki's visit to Etsuko in England, so the Nagasaki episodes of *Pale View* are framed by the visit of Etsuko's father-in-law, Ogata-San, to the family home. Ogata-San's main function in the novel is to explore the theme of the Japanese surrender, and the subsequent recriminations levelled by the younger generation against the old. The theme is principally explored through the description of an interminable chess game between father and son. Whilst Ogata-San spends much of the day contemplating the chess board, his son Jiro has little time to indulge his father. Jiro is representative of the new generation, and seems to belong as much in the 1980s of the novel's composition as he does in the narrated 1950s. He is a rising star in his company – although we never learn his specific occupation – and the conclusion of the chess game is constantly deferred, with Jiro pleading exhaustion and a busy day ahead of him at work. Ogata-San appears to be the model of the understanding father, and yet all the time it is apparent that he simply does not understand at all, that he cannot comprehend the change that has come over the new post-war generation.

Ogata-San, we have already learned, was a teacher before the war and in an earlier conversation brings up the troublesome matter, which he describes, in typically evasive fashion, as 'rather amusing' (p.30), of an article written by a former pupil, Shigeo Matsuda, which names Ogata-San and a colleague, Dr Endo, and which Ogata-San reads as 'implying that the profession was well rid of us' (p.31). Although the article is brought up again, over the chess board, we are left – as ever – to wonder

at the exact details. Despite this, Ogata-San's outburst after a visit by Jiro's colleagues has something of an air of the defensive about it:

"Take what happened in my profession, for instance. Here was a system we'd nurtured and cherished for years. The Americans came and stripped it, tore it down without a thought. They decided our schools would be like American schools, the children should learn what American children learn. And the Japanese welcomed it all. Welcomed it with a lot of talk about democracy" – he shook his head – "Many fine things were destroyed in our schools" (p.66).

The violence with which the American system 'strips', 'tears down' and 'destroys' the carefully 'nurtured and cherished' Japanese education system echoes the physical destruction caused by the atom bomb and frames the subsequent Americanisation of Japanese culture, society and, in this case, education as an act of imperial aggression.

Jiro's response, however, highlights the different viewpoints of the generations:

"But then I remember some odd things from my schooldays. I remember being taught all about how Japan was created by the gods, for instance. How we as a nation were divine and supreme ... Some things aren't such a loss, perhaps" (p.66).

Jiro's assessment suggests that Japan is well-rid of the pedagogical teachings of the past and implies criticism of Ogata-San's generation, suggesting that such teachings directly contributed to the rise in Japanese militarism and the dark fate which subsequently befell the country. Indeed, Ogata-San's concluding remark – 'We did our best, men like Endo and I, we did our best to nurture what was good in the country' (p.67) – does hint at something against which Ogata-San feels the need to defend himself. But this entire exchange also appears to form a critique of the sweeping changes that took place in Japan after the war, the wholesale imposition of an American system of democracy, and the division that is created between those who embrace the change and those who mourn what is lost.

The differing viewpoints of the generations are again hinted at as the chess game resumes. As the contest reaches its non-conclusion, Ogata-San rebukes Jiro for conceding the game: 'Why, Jiro, this is sheer defeatism. The game's far from lost ...

You should be planning your defence now, to survive and fight me again' (p.129). These comments are easily grafted onto Ogata-San's views of the Japanese surrender at the end of the Second World War and what he sees as the subsequent erosion of traditional Japanese values. As representative of the older generation, Ogata-San speaks for the pre-war Japan of militaristic nationalism and imperial ambition. His narrative (relayed to us, of course, within Etsuko's own narrative) works to defend, explain and justify the ideology of that day. Jiro, meanwhile, symbolises the younger, post-war generation who react against what they see as the sins of their fathers and, instead, embrace the new, American-led Japan of capitalism and globalisation. As such he also represents the Japan of the 1980s. However, to describe Ogata-San and Jiro only in such polarised terms is to over-simplify matters. Whilst their views may appear to be polarised, no such concrete positions are possible. Instead, a 'Third Space' opens up across the chess board. Black and white no longer stare at each other from the security of their own side of the board but clash in the interstitial squares in-between, destabilising binary divisions of old and young, pre-war and post, self and other. John McLeod identifies in *Pale View* a sense both of change *and* of continuity; 'The older certainties of the past are in ruins, but are not totally absent in the immediate post-war years. A new Japan is being constructed upon the remains of the old'⁸⁰. That is the Japan that emerges in the exchanges between Ogata-San and his son.

This ambiguity manifests itself in *Pale View* as the Ogata-San subplot progresses. Physically, for example, we learn that the elderly Ogata-San was 'still in the best of

⁸⁰ John McLeod, 'Rewriting History: Postmodern and Postcolonial Negotiations in the Fiction of J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1995), p.128.

health, displaying a well-built physique and the robust energy of a much younger man' (p.29) whilst his son 'had [the]...tendency to hunch forward – in a manner not unlike that of a boxer – whether standing or walking' (p.28). The descriptions appear to be the wrong way around, the elderly man perhaps reflecting some of his son's youth, whilst simultaneously seeing something of his old age when he looks at Jiro. The men are similar in other ways – Jiro's work ethic and his impeccable etiquette provide as much of a link to the past as they do a break from it. And in his attitude towards his wife, Jiro is particularly old-fashioned. One scene, described towards the end of the novel by Etsuko, after her husband has returned from a successful business meeting, is typical:

“Congratulations,” I said, smiling at my husband. “I’m so glad.”
 Jiro looked up, as if noticing me for the first time.
 “Why are you standing there like that?” he asked. “I wouldn’t mind some tea, you know.”
 He put down his towel and began combing his hair. (p.154)

Jiro appears to exercise in the domestic space precisely the same kind of power relation (of dominance and submission/self and other) that he purports to reject on the political level. It would appear, then, that when Jiro and Ogata-San look at each other, they see not only difference but also reflections of their own subjectivities. We might, at this point, turn to Homi K. Bhabha's work. In developing his theories on colonial discourse, Bhabha draws upon Lacan's notion of the mirror stage, suggesting that this provides the perfect model for describing what happens in the production of colonial stereotypes:

The Imaginary is the transformation that takes place in the subject at the formative mirror phase, when it assumes a *discrete* image which allows it to postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities, between the objects of the surrounding world. However, this positioning is itself problematic, for the subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational. This is the basis of the close relation between the two forms of identification complicit with the Imaginary – narcissism and aggressivity. It is precisely these two forms of identification that constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to the stereotype which, as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows

or masks it. Like the mirror phase ‘the fullness’ of the stereotype – its image *as* identity – is always threatened by ‘lack’.⁸¹

A similar process of recognition and disavowal, of narcissism and aggressivity, takes place as Ogata-San and Jiro face each other across the chess board. Stable subjectivities based on the binary of self and other are undone as each man sees not only difference but also something of himself when he fixes his gaze upon the ‘other’ sitting opposite. The unfixing of the stereotypes through which each man views the other gives rise to a negotiated ground which serves to close the gap between the two generations and suggest that the extent of the change experienced in post-war Japan is not necessarily as profound as it first seems. Extending the argument, Japan’s newfound, American-led position in the global economy may be less of a break from the past than it appears. I will explore this notion in more detail later in this chapter, in my analysis of *An Artist of the Floating World*.

If the influence of America is apparent in *Pale View* in passing references to the presence of American troops and in the increasingly Americanised work patterns and social habits of the younger generation, then it is also figured through one of the novel’s key intertextual references. According to Julia Kristeva, any text is ‘a productivity...a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another’⁸². No text has a meaning unique to itself. As such, we may examine these ‘utterances’ from other texts in terms of the additional meaning they might convey upon the text in question. One text to which Ishiguro makes very clear reference in *Pale View* is Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. Like *Pale View*, Puccini’s opera is set in Nagasaki and

⁸¹ Bhabha, *Location*, p.77.

⁸² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.36.

the story – of the once prosperous heroine, and her daughter Sorrow, who fall upon hard times and are then let down by an American suitor, Lt. Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, who had promised to marry Madame Butterfly and take her and her daughter to America⁸³ – is easily mapped onto that of Sachiko, her American lover, Frank, and Mariko. Lewis reads the opera as ‘present[ing] what is plainly an artificial Japan, at several removes from the reality of the country’⁸⁴. Thus, intertextual references to *Madama Butterfly* are significant in undermining the referential certainty in *Pale View*, since the ‘overt intertextual nods towards Puccini hint at the novel’s constructedness, preventing the reader from interpreting its depicted world too literally’⁸⁵.

Whilst it would indeed be wrong to read either *Pale View* or *Madama Butterfly* as historically precise representations of Nagasaki, so it would also be wrong to dismiss either text as entirely fabricated. As Burton Fisher notes:

Madama Butterfly provided Puccini with an opportunity to musically characterize Eastern exoticisms, ethnicity, ambience and atmosphere – as well as American and Western characteristics. In pursuing his musical sketches for *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini ... pored over collections of Japanese folk music, records, books on Japanese customs, religious ceremonies and architecture, ultimately becoming an astute student of Oriental ethnography.⁸⁶

There appears to be a tension in this quotation between the exotic representation of an imagined Japan which fits in with Lewis’s reading and the rigorous historical and cultural research which preceded that representation, a tension which perhaps reflects ‘the clash of culture, or the incompatibility of Eastern and Western culture,[which] forms the underlying engine’⁸⁷ of *Madama Butterfly*. Here perhaps, then, is another way of reading *Pale View*’s intertextual nod to the Puccini opera, one which draws

⁸³ For a full synopsis, see Burton Fisher, *Puccini’s MADAMA BUTTERFLY : Opera Classics Library Series* (Miami, FL: Opera Classics Library Series, 2001), p.27.

⁸⁴ Lewis, p.23.

⁸⁵ Lewis, p.23.

⁸⁶ Fisher, p.14.

⁸⁷ Fisher, p.14.

attention to the collision of cultures which forms the backdrop to the novel both in terms of the terrible outcome of a quite literal clash between East and West and, on a more personal level, in the failure of Keiko to settle when she is displaced from Japan to England, and the tragic consequences of that failure to find a place in an alien culture. Broadening this reading out, we might also read this incommensurability between East and West as an implicit criticism of theories of globalisation and cosmopolitanism which too readily acclaim the Japan of the 1980s as a model for transnational existence in the late twentieth century.

Ghostly exile

To recap, so far in my analysis of *A Pale View of Hills* I have examined the temporal structure of the novel, suggesting that the gap between the primary and secondary narratives allows Etsuko to manipulate her account of the latter. An important figure in this manipulation is the narratee, who occupies the same temporal and spatial location as Etsuko in the primary narrative and whose resultant unfamiliarity with the events of the secondary narrative enables Etsuko to mis-remember the history she relates. The gap between narrative levels also highlights the conflict between the generations which characterises this and other Ishiguro novels. In *Pale View*, that conflict is principally played out in the secondary narrative, through the Ogata-san sub-plot (although it is present also in the primary narrative in the uneasy relationship between Etsuko and Nikki and in the recent suicide of Keiko). That sub-plot emphasises the growing influence of America upon the younger generation of Japanese and foreshadows the subsequent integration of Japan as a key player in the global economy of the late twentieth century. But it simultaneously problematises that American influence by suggesting that the division between the older and younger generations may not be as wide as first appears and that, whilst much has changed,

much also remains of the 'old' Japan. A similar ambiguity towards the American influence is found in the novel's key intertextual reference. Whilst parallels with the story of *Madama Butterfly* may point to America's increasing hegemonic position in the world, they also reveal tensions between East and West which are prefigured in the dropping of the atomic bombs upon Japan and which suggest a degree of cultural incommensurability which will subsequently undermine theories of transnational economic and cultural co-existence.

To conclude my analysis of *A Pale View of Hills*, I wish to turn now to the novel's flirtation with the ghost story, and to suggest that this ties in with several of the novel's key themes and features, most notably the largely unacknowledged but ubiquitous fallout from the atomic bomb. As I shall discuss in Chapter Two, Ishiguro frequently appropriates and distorts recognised genres in order to achieve his thematic ends. His employment of certain conventions of the ghost story does not, in the case of *Pale View*, extend to a full-blown appropriation of the genre but the motifs of ghosts and suicide are prominent nonetheless and contribute to the novel's distinctly Japanese tone. Lewis agrees that 'the treatment of suicide and ghosts in *A Pale View of Hills* is crucial for determining the extent of its Japaneseness, as these themes help mould the milieu of the novel and are ubiquitous in Japanese culture'⁸⁸. However, Lewis adopts Gustav Freytag's model of the five components of dramatic plot⁸⁹ to argue that Ishiguro's treatment of these motifs owes more to the European tradition than to the conventions of Japanese fiction. Thus the ghost tale in the outer frame of the novel – in which Etsuko and Niki, haunted by Keiko's suicide, struggle to maintain their

⁸⁸ Lewis, p.28.

⁸⁹ Gustav Freytag, *Freytag's Technique of the Drama: an exposition of dramatic compositions and art*, trans. by Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1908). The five components are Initial Situation, Conflict, Complications, Climax and Resolution (see Freytag, pp.114-140/Lewis, pp.29-34).

relationship amid troubling dreams and unexpected noises in the middle of the night – and that of the inner narrative – in which Etsuko attempts to establish the identity of the mysterious woman Mariko claims to have befriended, against the backdrop of a series of macabre child murders – both serve to undermine the novel’s Japanese elements by avoiding ‘the supernatural surfeit of the Japanese tradition’⁹⁰ and, instead, ‘play[ing] with the recipe of the paradigmatic European ghost tale’⁹¹. For Lewis, then, Ishiguro’s treatment of the ghost story element of *Pale View* distances the novel from the Japan in which it is set, just as the intertextual references to *Madame Butterfly* serve to undermine any sense of authenticity in Ishiguro’s depiction of that country.

There is, however, another way of reading Ishiguro’s treatment of the ghost element of *Pale View*. By virtue of Ishiguro’s own background, and of the historical context of the novel, *Pale View* may be positioned in relation to the body of work by Japanese authors which explores the atomic bombs and their legacy. In his study of this body of work, John Whittier Treat identifies three distinct stages in the development of atom bomb literature⁹². The first of these ‘three post-nuclear “generations”’⁹³, writing in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, ‘work ... to convey the unconveyable, and ... thus focus on problems of mimesis and imagination’⁹⁴. The second generation, which emerged after the events had in some way become comprehensible, ‘began to treat the bombings as a social or individual inner problem’⁹⁵ and the third examine the ways in

⁹⁰ Lewis, p.31.

⁹¹ Lewis, p.31.

⁹² Treat, p.21.

⁹³ Treat, p.21.

⁹⁴ Treat, p.21.

⁹⁵ Treat, p.21.

which the bombs have left a legacy of ‘a permanent imaginative state of threatened being’⁹⁶.

Whilst Ishiguro, a non-*hibakusha* living and writing in England, does not fit wholly into any of these three categories, elements of each might be identified in *Pale View*, and the ghost theme is the thread which binds these elements together. Treat describes the way in which writers from the earliest of these three generations were confronted with ‘the purported inaccessibility of the experience of nuclear bombing, its inconvertibility into a chain of words that might faithfully refer’⁹⁷. It is this problem which faces Etsuko as she presents her narrative. Unlike Ishiguro, Etsuko is – of course – a bomb victim, and like her fellow *hibakusha* who attempt to write the experience in the aftermath of the bombs, she discovers that – even at a distance of a quarter of a century – ‘the language which speaks Hiroshima is uncanny, strange, wrong’⁹⁸. We might, at this juncture, return to the work of Bhabha, who argues that ‘[a]lthough the “unhomely” is a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition, it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites’⁹⁹. In the grip of the uncanny, ‘[t]he recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting’¹⁰⁰. At home neither in the post-war, post-atomic wasteland of Nagasaki or in the alien charms of rural England, Etsuko’s repressed memories of Niki’s suicide merge with those of the

⁹⁶ Treat, p.21.

⁹⁷ Treat, p.27.

⁹⁸ Treat, p.84.

⁹⁹ Bhabha, *Location*, p.9.

¹⁰⁰ Bhabha, *Location*, p.9.

atomic bomb; '[t]he unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence'¹⁰¹. 'The unhomely', then, is an apt description both of Etsuko's cold and haunted country house and of Sachiko's decrepit cottage across the metaphorically-loaded wasteland in Nagasaki. These locations, and the 'ghosts' which haunt them, are eerily appropriate 'Third Spaces' in which Etsuko's repressed memories – both personal and political – return to haunt and undermine her narrative.

The ghost theme in *Pale View* fits, then, into the first of Treat's three stages of atomic bomb fiction, standing as metaphor for the impotence of language in the wake of the cataclysmic events. But traces of the remaining phases might also be identified in Ishiguro's treatment of the ghost theme. The psychological effects left in the bomb's wake – typical of the second phase of Japanese post-nuclear writing which Treat identifies as being characterised by the treatment of the bombs as 'a social or individual inner problem' – manifest themselves both in the outer-narrative, in the shape of Etsuko and Niki's troubled nights in Etsuko's English home, and in the inner-narrative, largely in the shape of the psychologically damaged Mariko, and in the macabre child-murders which form the immediate background to the Nagasaki episode. Similarly, these episodes also illustrate the manner in which the characters can be said to live in the 'permanent imaginative state of threatened being'¹⁰² which characterises the third phase of atomic fiction. As such, Ishiguro's treatment of the ghost and suicide themes in *Pale View* might be viewed not so much as undermining the Japanese element of the novel but, alternatively, as an apt metaphor for the mental torment caused by the bomb, and for the sheer incommunicability of the event itself.

¹⁰¹ Bhabha, *Location*, p.11.

¹⁰² Bhabha, *Location*, p.21.

Ishiguro's distance – both temporal and physical – from the event means that it is difficult to place his work firmly within the genre of Japanese atomic bomb literature. However, although his narrator and protagonist, Etsuko, is similarly distanced from the event at the time of narrating, the secondary narrative places her firmly within a position from which her narrative may be read, in part at least, as a response to the dropping of the atomic bombs upon Japan. As such, the sense of alienation and of the uncanny experienced by Etsuko and the other characters take on metaphorical significance. Significantly, however, these moments of alienation and the uncanny are by no means confined to the novel's secondary narrative. The fact that the primary narrative finds Etsuko alienated, friendless, and seriously spooked in the English countryside, far from Nagasaki, hints at a broader significance to the novel's treatment of the atomic bomb, reminding us that – for all the seeds of cosmopolitanism evident both in the novel and in society in general at the time of publication - the world at that time remained polarised by the Cold War and haunted by the spectre of potential nuclear destruction.

One of these great nuclear powers was, of course, the United States of America and that nation's emergence as a global force informs much of *A Pale View of Hills*. References to the use of Japan as a base for American troops fighting in Korea, and the larger Americanisation of business and culture, point to the ways in which countries such as Japan became important political and geographical allies during the Cold War. Beyond post-war geo-political considerations, however, the enthusiastic manner in which the younger generation successfully adopt American economic and business practices (and rejuvenate their war-shattered country in the process) points both to the increasing (American-driven) globalisation in the late twentieth century

moment of the novel's production and, simultaneously, to some of the inequities within that emerging transnational mode of living, most notably in those who it excludes, who find themselves 'out of time'. Similarly, the parallels between the tale of Madama Butterfly, her troubled daughter, and her American lover and that of Sachiko, Frank, and the troubled Mariko might be seen to strengthen the novel's exploration of the disastrous clash of cultures which culminated in the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That clash of cultures continues into the post-war years, as the younger generation thrive in the newly democratised, American-influenced Japan, whilst the older generation struggle to make sense of past, present and future. This generational conflict is explored in the novel's sub-plot, largely through the never-ending chess game played out between Jiro and Ogata-San. The stereotypical views that each generation has of the other break down in the resultant clash, suggesting that neither generation can lay claim to a stable subject position and that the old and the new are less different than either side cares to admit. Meanwhile, the themes of shame, blame and generational conflict which this subplot introduces will in turn become the central focus of Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*.

An Artist of the Floating World

Two days before Christmas 1948, *The Times* newspaper carried an article reporting the execution for crimes against humanity of several key figures in the Japanese wartime administration¹⁰³. The executions followed a war-crimes trial which lasted for more than a year, and proceeded after several of the condemned men failed in an appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The best known of the executed men was Japan's wartime Prime Minister, General Hideki Tojo. Amongst the seven executed

¹⁰³ Author unknown, 'Seven Executions in Japan: Leading War Criminals', *The Times*, 23 December 1948, p.4.

men was one civilian, Koki Hirota. Despite his civilian status, Hirota ‘was deemed guilty of crimes against humanity grave enough to merit the death penalty’ having ‘ranked among the principal architects of the “Great East Asia co-prosperity sphere” and other projects for bringing millions of human beings into servitude under the iron heel of his country’¹⁰⁴.

Ishiguro’s second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, begins in late 1948, just as these war-crime trials are reaching their dénouement. This official process of trial and retribution provides the unspoken backdrop to the personal reflections of the novel’s narrator, Masuji Ono. Once a celebrated artist, the elderly patriarch finds himself compelled by the larger events to reflect upon his own actions before and during the war. At a time when those who led the nation down an expansionist path are being brought to account, Ono’s narrative sees him search his own conscience as he wrestles with the same questions of blame, guilt and honour which are encapsulated in the trial of the war criminals. Central to this process of reflection is the very question of historical agency – was Ono simply another individual swept along in the tide of history or does he, like the condemned civilian Hirota, bear a portion of the responsibility for the events which befell Japan and her people during that fateful period? My analysis of *Artist* will examine such questions. Once again, I will begin by attending to the structural aspects of the novel. In particular, I shall examine the structuring device of ‘The Bridge of Hesitation’ which Ishiguro employs in order to allow Ono to, quite literally, bridge the temporal gap between primary and secondary narratives. That secondary narrative is concerned with Ono’s memories of his development as a professional artist, memories which reveal a link between the

¹⁰⁴ Author unknown, ‘Seven Executions in Japan: Leading War Criminals’, *The Times*, 23 December 1948, p.4.

secondary narrative and the time of the novel's publication in terms of the work practices they recall. They also reveal the reason behind Ono's alienation in the primary narrative. I will conclude by exploring in more detail the nature of that alienation, suggesting that Ono's post-war ostracism paves the way for the novel's exploration of the extent and nature of the historical agency and responsibility of the individual.

Bridging the Past

An Artist of the Floating World comprises four separate sections, dated October 1948, April 1949, November 1949 and June 1950. As Cynthia Wong observes, this structure – whereby Ono's narrative is spread over a time period of almost two years – allows for subtle changes in the narrative position which 'suggest Ono's modification of his stories as he moves forward'¹⁰⁵. Indeed, the author himself identifies the narrative possibilities of such a format as the principal factor behind his choice of this style for the novel:

[The novel] uses very much the diary method. Technically, the advantage of the diary narrative is that each entry can be written from a different emotional position. What [Ono] writes in October 1948 is actually written out of a different set of assumptions than the pieces that are written later on. That really was the sole reason for dividing the book up into four chunks, each ostensibly written in a sitting or whatever at the point when the date is given: just so that we can watch his progress, and so that the language itself changes slightly.¹⁰⁶

Within these four 'chunks', the novel adopts the same multilayered structure that is familiar from *A Pale View of Hills*. Once again, the narrator tells his story at the *extradiegetic* level, since Ono narrates each section after the events within that section have occurred (although in *Artist* this position is somewhat less stable since each section is narrated before many of the events in subsequent sections have occurred).

¹⁰⁵ Cynthia Wong, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p.38.

¹⁰⁶ Gregory Mason, 'An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro' in *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*, ed. by Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F. Wong (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), p.12.

The present day frame for Ono's narrative is narrated at the *intradiegetic* level, and the embedded pre-war episodes at the *metadiegetic* level.

The primary narrative in *An Artist of the Floating World* is occupied by the protracted negotiation of Ono's daughter Noriko's engagement; an engagement which Ono fears may be undermined by the skeletons within his own closet. It is these concerns which trigger Ono's frequent digressions into the secondary narrative, through which we slowly come to learn of his past, from the kindling of his artistic ambitions as a child to his role as propaganda painter for the Japanese militarist government. It is this element of his past which Ono fears may come to light before or during Noriko's *miai*¹⁰⁷, causing the other family to break off the arrangement. Thus, he organises and manipulates these memories in an ultimately ill-fated attempt to define and defend his role before, during and indeed after the war. Like Etsuko before him, Ono is another of Ishiguro's trademark unreliable narrators, his fading memory filling the pages of the novel with half remembered episodes and un-attributable quotes. Behind his self-deprecating forgetfulness lies an ambiguity of meaning which leaves the reader to wonder whether he is valiantly grasping at forgotten episodes or deliberately suppressing events he would rather remain lost in the mists of time.

One of the ways in which Ishiguro achieves this referential ambiguity is, as we have seen, through dividing the novel into four sections, each of which allows for subtle shifts in Ono's narrative position which are apparent to the reader, if not always to Ono himself. Within these sections, the novel's multi-layered structure further adds to

¹⁰⁷ The *miai* is a formal function at which the two families meet, often for the first time. Prior to the *miai*, both parties may hire private investigators to ensure the other family's suitability for the match. Ono fears that this process may expose his role in the Imperial government's war effort, causing the other party to break off from the agreement.

the sense of contingency surrounding Ono's narrative, as seemingly unconnected events are juxtaposed in such a way as to create new meaning, or add greater uncertainty, from seemingly disparate episodes. Ishiguro controls the temporal ambiguities in the novel through a number of structuring devices. Perhaps the most overt of these is 'the Bridge of Hesitation', upon which the narrative opens, and to which it returns at the opening of two of the three remaining sections of the novel. These three episodes illustrate the manner in which each section of the novel invokes a subtle change in perspective and also the way in which Ishiguro negotiates the temporal gap between primary and secondary narratives. The 'October, 1948' section begins:

If on a sunny day you climb the steep path leading up from the little wooden bridge still referred to around here as 'the Bridge of Hesitation', you will not have to walk far before the roof of my house becomes visible between the tops of two gingko trees. Even if it did not occupy such a commanding position on the hill, the house would still stand out from all others nearby, so that as you come up the path, you may find yourself wondering what sort of wealthy man owns it. (p.7)

Although Ono goes on to claim 'I am not, nor have I ever been, a wealthy man' (p.7), the passage hints at the hubris intrinsic to the narrator's character. The sense of pride, the declaration of status that is afforded by owning such a prestigious property, contains an element of the defensive about it, perhaps pointing to the doubts and self-evaluation to follow. Nevertheless, the initial impression conveyed by the passage is one of pride and of status. Perhaps only the fact that the crossing is '*still* referred to' as 'the Bridge of Hesitation' warns the otherwise unsuspecting reader that all is not as it seems, suggesting a history, a past, some sort of change.

The passage also gives the first clues as to the nature and identity of Ono's narratee. Whilst in *Pale View* the narratee was somewhat of a spectral (if compliant) presence, in *Artist* s/he begins to emerge more clearly. I will examine the ways in which this

emerging identity takes shape shortly. And yet, in some ways this listener remains a spectral, shadowy figure: as Charles Sarvan argues, '[o]ne hesitates to describe this work of hesitations as a memoir, for Ono appears to address a silent interlocutor – a Japanese, not totally unfamiliar with the locality. Yet his speaking to another seems only to be a talking to oneself'¹⁰⁸.

The first evidence that Ono's listener may indeed be 'not totally unfamiliar with the locality' comes in this opening passage. As we shall see, there are several stages later in the novel where the narratee stands out far more prominently. Nevertheless, the reference to *you* 'climb[ing] the steep path' and 'com[ing] up the path', together with the extra local detail provided by the 'two ginkgo trees' suggests a listener whose familiarity with the locality will become much more obvious as the novel progresses.

Indeed, Ishiguro himself endorses just such a reading:

The reader that I intended obviously isn't the "you" that Ono refers to. Ono in his narrative assumes that anyone reading it must live in the city and must be aware of its landmarks...And whether the reader registers it consciously or not, it cannot help but create the effect of actually eavesdropping on Ono being intimate with somebody in his own town.¹⁰⁹

As I have already suggested, the extent to which the identity or nature of this narratee emerges during Ono's staging of the past will emerge as further elements of the novel are explored.

The second section of the novel, 'April, 1949', also begins with a reference to the bridge: 'On three or four evenings a week I still find myself taking that path down to the river and the little wooden bridge still known to some who lived here before the war as "the Bridge of Hesitation"' (p.99). The passage which opens this second

¹⁰⁸ Charles Sarvan, 'Floating Signifiers in *An Artist of the Floating World*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 32.1 (1997), p.101 [note 4].

¹⁰⁹ Mason in Shaffer and Wong, p.9.

section of the novel appears, then, to be almost identical to that with which the novel began. In particular, Ono again emphasises the fact that the bridge is *still* known by the same name. The tone of the passage, however, digresses slightly from that of the earlier one. We learn, for example, that the bridge was given its enigmatic name ‘before the war’. Ono goes on to explain why:

We called it that because until not so long ago, crossing it would have taken you into our pleasure district, and conscience-troubled men – so it was said – were to be seen hovering there, caught between seeking an evening’s entertainment and returning home to their wives. But if sometimes I am to be seen up on that bridge, leaning thoughtfully against the rail, it is not that I am hesitating. It is simply that I enjoy standing there as the sun sets, surveying my surroundings and the changes taking place around me. (p.99)

The passage reveals more regarding the identity of Ono’s listener. The fact that he feels it necessary to explain how the bridge came upon this name suggests that his listener is from a different, younger generation, a suggestion reinforced by the fact that crossing the bridge would have led to the pleasure district ‘until not so long ago’. The relationship between narrator and narratee, then, seems to reinforce the generational conflict which runs through both this novel and its predecessor: Ono’s narrative, his defence of his conduct before and during the war, is addressed to a representative of that younger generation who have rejected the ways of their fathers and embraced the American-led democratisation of Japan. Ono’s increasing alienation is emphasised by the fact that the changes he observes from the bridge take place *around* him. There is a distinct sense that Ono – and the generation he represents – is excluded from that process of change, that he finds himself outside the times. His claims not to be hesitating are unconvincing; instead, we note perhaps the setting sun and recognise it as a metaphor for the end of a particular notion of Japan which Ono represents and recalls and, at the same time, a reminder that for Ono and his generation, time really is almost up.

The final reference to ‘the Bridge of Hesitation’ comes at the beginning of the short final section of the novel, dated ‘June, 1950’, shortly after Ono learns of the death of Matsuda, a figure who, as we shall see, has cast a heavy and largely malevolent political influence over Ono’s artistic career. Having learned of Matsuda’s death, Ono describes his reaction:

The day was pleasantly warm as I made my way down the hill. On reaching the river, I stepped up on to the Bridge of Hesitation and looked around me. The sky was clear blue, and a little way down the bank, along where the new apartment blocks began, I could see two small boys playing with fishing poles at the water’s edge. I watched them for some moments, turning over in my mind the news about Matsuda. (p.197)

Once again, there seems to be a subtle shift in the tone of the passage. On this occasion, when ‘surveying his surroundings’, Ono observes not the setting of the sun but rather clear blue skies. The changes which surrounded him in the previous passage appear to have run their course; the new development of apartment blocks is completed and the two boys fishing in the river are a comforting symbol of domestic well-being, suggesting that both Japan and Ono himself have put their troubled pasts behind them and are ready to face the future with renewed optimism. But the image of the two boys also has a second, far less comfortable significance for Ono. As I will discuss shortly, the scene contains discomfiting echoes for Ono of a key episode from his past, one which plays a pivotal role in the politicizing of his artistic work. As such, this final pause upon ‘the Bridge of Hesitation’ suggests that whilst Japan’s transition from pre-war protectionism and aggressive imperialism to open and outward-reaching capitalism may be complete, Ono and his kind remain excluded from that brave new world.

The ‘Bridge of Hesitation’, then, is an important device in the control of the novel’s temporal structure. Returning to the same geographical point on three different occasions which span the twenty-one months of the primary narrative, Ishiguro is able

to hint at the shifting perspectives in Ono's narrative and to map the extent and rapid nature of the changes taking place in post-war Japan, changes from which Ono and his generation are excluded. The bridge metaphor provides a link between the primary and secondary narratives, the latter of which contains the key as to why Ono's generation appear to be excluded from the 'new' Japan. To examine the questions of blame, responsibility and historical agency which that secondary narrative raises, it is necessary to trace the development of Ono's artistic ideology, and to expose those individuals and institutions which mediate that development. The next section, therefore, will trace Ono's career through its chronological stages.

Art and Professionalism

The first structure through which Ono's artistic identity is mediated is that of the family. In the first section of the novel, Ono describes the weekly 'business meetings' his father would require him to attend from the age of twelve. These meetings, Ono speculates, were designed 'to impress upon me from that early age his expectation that I would eventually take over the family business' (p.43). In order to fully understand the significance of these childhood memories, it is important to put this period of Ono's life within its proper historical context. As Alyn Webley notes, '[t]his part of Ono's narrative returns him to Japan at the beginning of the [twentieth] century, which was a pivotal time in the historical development of that country ... By situating his account of the development of Ono's character in a time when Japan was going through a process of intense modernisation and internal reform in which the values and techniques of Western capitalist societies was being rapidly assimilated,

Ishiguro sets the scene for a demonstration of the impact of changing hegemonies'¹¹⁰. But the changes which Japan is encountering at the beginning of the century seem to foreshadow these which it will experience towards the end of that same century. In particular, the 'intense modernisation', the adoption of the methods and practices of 'Western...societies' and Ono's father's ultra-capitalist attitudes appear to locate the narrative as much in the 1980s as it does in the early decades of the century. In other words, the gap between the time of the narrated events and the time of narration is blurred, so that the novel takes on a kind of double temporality, with the economic and business practices Ono encounters in his artistic career appearing to stand in part at least as metaphor for more contemporary global economic practices.

The impact of changing hegemonies which Webley alludes to (and which again prefigures the transition marked in the novel between pre- and post-war Japan) is exhibited through the tensions within the patriarchal relationship between Ono and his businessman father. Ono goes on to recall being summonsed, at the age of fifteen, to 'a different kind of meeting' (p.43). What follows is a scene that becomes integral to the development of Ono's sense of subjectivity throughout the remainder of the novel. Ono's father confronts him about his intentions to make a career out of his painting, making clear his own feelings on the subject:

[M]y father said: "Tell me, Masuji, have you any idea what kind of world artists inhabit?" I remained silent, looking at the floor before me. "Artists", my father's voice continued, "live in squalor and poverty. They inhabit a world which gives them every temptation to become weak-willed and depraved." (p.46)

The world of the artist, in the eyes of Ono's father, is the antithesis of the disciplined world of business for which he has been priming his son with their weekly meetings.

¹¹⁰ Alyn Webley, 'Making and Breaking Hegemonies: Kazuo Ishiguro and History', *Postgraduate English*, 14 (September 2006) <<http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/AlynWebleyArticle.htm>> [accessed 20 March 2007].

The scene continues with Ono's father burning his son's paintings, an act which is intended to put an end to Ono's inappropriate ambitions. However, Ono confides in his mother that '[t]he only thing Father's succeeded in kindling is my ambition' (p.47). The clash between two competing sets of values is apparent as he continues:

"You mustn't misunderstand me, Mother. I have no wish to find myself in years to come, sitting where Father is now sitting, telling my own son about accounts and money. [...] When I said I was ambitious, I meant I wished to rise above such a life." (p.47)

As Ono continues, there emerges a hostility towards the workings of capitalism which will play a key role in the ultimate politicisation of his art and which, in the shorter term, will drive him from his home in an attempt to prove his father wrong.

Ono's first steps as a professional artist take him to the studio of the Takeda firm, in the Furukawa district of the city. Again a sense both of tradition and of change is invoked in his description of the area:

It is perhaps hard for you to picture how ugly Furukawa was in those days. Indeed, if you are new to the city, my talking of the Furukawa district probably conjures up the park that stands there today and the peach trees for which it is renowned. But when I first came to this city – in 1913 – the area was full of factories and warehouses belonging to the smaller companies, many of them abandoned or in disrepair. (p.65)

The over-familiar tone of the passage again draws notice to the novel's narratee – the direct reference to the listener as 'you', the assumption that s/he knows the park to which Ono refers, or the fact that the area is known for its peaches – is an important element of Ono's narrative strategy, allowing him to draw his narratee closer into his story and to garner sympathy and trust, both of which he may require as his narrative progresses. But the passage also links back subtly to the conflict between art and business which emerges from Ono's confrontation with his father. Ono's first steps as a professional artist take him into the very heart of a run-down business district. As such, the passage suggests that the worlds of art and of commerce are not so easily separated as both Ono and his father, for different reasons, would choose to believe.

The commercial tone is further highlighted by Ono's description of the schedule to which the employees of Takeda's studio were required to work:

[T]here was no chance of our completing our schedule without working in the evenings. The Takeda firm prided itself on its ability to provide a high number of paintings at very short notice; indeed, Master Takeda gave us to understand that if we failed to fulfil our deadline in time for the ship leaving harbour, we would quickly lose future commissions to rival firms. (p.66)

In Chapter Two, I will discuss two of Ishiguro's later novels in terms of their portrayal of professionalism and suggest that these portrayals relate equally to the type of work practices associated with our own contemporary period. The same can be seen in this passage: the extra evening shifts required to meet targets and make ends meet; the production line techniques; the pressure to fulfil orders or else lose them to rival competitors – each of these factors rings as equally true of the workplace today as it does of Ono's experiences in pre-war Japan.

Indeed, the reader becomes aware of an irony apparently lost upon Ono; the artistic endeavour of which he finds himself a part is no less of a business enterprise than the very activities which he finds so objectionable in his father. This is underlined by Ono's description of the paintings he is required to produce:

[T]he essential point about the sort of things we were commissioned to paint – geishas, cherry trees, swimming carps, temples – was that they look "Japanese" to the foreigners to whom they were shipped out, and all the finer points of style were quite likely to go unnoticed. (p.69)

The irony here is, at least partly, self-reflexive; both *An Artist of the Floating World* and *A Pale View of Hills* present a highly affected vision of Japan. As Malcolm Bradbury observes of *Artist*, the novel is 'a stylised piece of Japonaiserie'¹¹¹, that is, it is characterised by a profusion of what might be described as stereotypical symbols of

¹¹¹ Malcolm Bradbury, *No, Not Bloomsbury* (London: André Deutsch, 1987), p.365.

Japan¹¹². Nevertheless, the passage also illustrates the fact that Ono finds himself part of a business venture in which art is just another commodity. As such, his first experiences in the world of professional art bring him into contact with the very ideology against which he balks during the confrontation with his father. Indeed, the artistic endeavour he is involved in resembles nothing so much as an assembly line of the type which would come to define the Japanese economic miracle in the latter part of the century.

Eventually, Ono becomes aware that he has become just another cog in the capitalist machine. He confesses to a fellow pupil that his work has come to the attention of the celebrated artist Seiji Moriyama:

‘Mr Moriyama,’ I said, ‘is a *true* artist. In all likelihood, a great one. I’ve been exceptionally fortunate to receive his attention and advice. Indeed, it’s his opinion that my remaining with Master Takeda will do irreparable harm to my gifts, and he has invited me to become his pupil. [...] And you know, as I was strolling through the park just now, I was thinking to myself: “Of course, Mr Moriyama is absolutely correct. It’s all very well for the rest of those workhorses to toil under Master Takeda to earn their living. But those of us with serious ambitions must look elsewhere.”’ (p.71)

The passage illustrates neatly the complex and ambiguous elements that go into making Ono’s character; on the one hand there is the incredible conceit of the man in considering himself above the other ‘workhorses’, and the swollen pride at having been ‘recognised’ by Moriyama; on the other, the scene bears witness to the naive manner in which he allows himself to be influenced by others, a characteristic which will have far greater consequences when he meets the persuasive Matsuda later in the novel. In the meantime, it appears to require the intervention of an outsider, in this case Moriyama, to enable Ono to come to realise the true nature of his employment at

¹¹² Nor is this the only moment of self-reflexive irony in *An Artist of the Floating World*. In another episode, Ono describes the hotel in which Noriko’s wedding *miai* takes place: ‘For many years, the Kasuga Park Hotel had been amongst the most pleasant of the Western-style hotels in the city; these days, though, the management has taken to decorating the rooms in a somewhat vulgar manner – intended, no doubt, to strike the American clientele with whom the place is popular as being charmingly “Japanese”’. (p.116).

the Takeda firm. As McLeod points out, Ono's defection from Takeda's studio has disquieting similarities with the earlier confrontation with his father; 'Once again, Ono's ambition has been kindled through the rejection of life at the service of business.'¹¹³

Moriyama – 'or "Mori-san" as we always called him' (p.137) – becomes the latest influence upon Ono's artistic ability. As Ono himself admits:

Certainly, for my own part, whatever the obvious shortcomings of my former teacher ..., whatever occurred between us in the end, I would always acknowledge that those seven years I spent living at his family villa out in the hilly countryside of the Wakaba prefecture were some of the most crucial to my career. (p.137)

The tenor of the passage is a perfect combination of the self-deprecating and the condescending; Ono's acknowledgement of Mori-san's influence is tempered firstly by the 'obvious shortcomings', of which the reader has yet to learn, and secondly – and more significantly still – by the promise of some kind of breakdown in the relationship akin to those which ruptured Ono's affiliations with both his father and with Takeda.

It is under the tutelage of Mori-san that Ono is first exposed to the 'floating world' school of art. The 'floating world', or *ukiyo*, is the term used to describe the pleasure districts which sprung up in Japan during the Tokugawa (or Edo) period (1640-1850)¹¹⁴. This was '[a] world of fugitive pleasures, of theatres and restaurants, wrestling-booths and houses of assignation, with their permanent population of actors, dancers, singers, story-tellers, jesters, courtesans, bath-girls and itinerant purveyors, among whom mingled the profligate sons of rich merchants, dissolute samurai and

¹¹³ McLeod, p.139.

¹¹⁴ Ian Nish, *The Story of Japan* (London: Faber, 1968), p.64.

naughty apprentices’¹¹⁵. The ‘floating world’ is, thus, a world of transient pleasure and trifling amusement.

The art which developed out of this period was ‘the realistic paintings, called “pictures of the fleeting world” (ukiyo-e), of courtesans and city life, and the colored woodblock prints developed from this style’¹¹⁶. The period spawned a number of celebrated artists, among them ‘Kitagawa Utamaro [who] was famous for his [paintings of] beautiful women’¹¹⁷. In one scene in the novel, Ono explains how Mori-san comes to be known as ‘the modern Utamaro’:

Mori-san was consciously trying to ‘modernize’ the Utamaro tradition; in many of his most notable paintings – ‘Tying a Dance Drum’, say, or ‘After a Bath’ – the woman is seen from the back in classic Utamaro fashion. Various other such classic features recur in his work: the woman holding a towel to her face, the woman combing out her long hair. And Mori-san made extensive use of the traditional device of expressing emotion through the textiles which the woman holds or wears rather than through the look on her face. But at the same time, his work was full of European influences ...; he had, for instance, long abandoned the use of the traditional dark outline to define his shapes, preferring instead the Western use of blocks of colour, with light and shade to create a three-dimensional appearance. And no doubt, he had taken his cue from the Europeans in what was his most central concern: the use of subdued colours. (pp.140-1)

There is in Mori-san’s painting, then, a distinct mixture of change and continuity. John McLeod notes a further structural link between the ‘floating world’ and the concerns of Ono’s narrative: ‘Ono’s narrative is a [sic] influenced by the sombre insubstantiality of *ukiyo*. It has a temperate, elegiac tone that reflects perhaps Ono’s sadness at the passing of his previous life. ... [Furthermore], the insubstantiality highlighted in *ukiyo* is of service to Ono’s strategic narrative. His text exorcises the guilt he feels as a collaborator with the Japanese militarists of the 1930s by making his past as insubstantial as the heady pleasures of the floating world’¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁵ G.B. Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History* (London: The Cresset Press, 1952), p.477.

¹¹⁶ Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p.110.

¹¹⁷ Reischauer and Craig, p.111.

¹¹⁸ McLeod, p.136.

The ‘floating world’ may serve Ono’s narrative purpose well but he slowly comes to realise that – just as was the case with Master Takeda’s studio – it is less satisfactory when it comes to fulfilling his artistic identity. Fault lines emerge alluding to Ono’s increasing discontent with the ‘floating world’ despite his own growing reputation as one of the movement’s leading lights. There begins to emerge the sense that life at Mori-san’s villa is as stifling as it is inspiring; Ono comments that ‘[w]e lived throughout those years almost entirely in accordance with his values and lifestyle’ (p.144). In a chilling echo of the earlier ‘business meetings’ with his father, Ono describes the ritual which accompanies the completion of every Moriyama painting:

One ... room, which filled with a clear light through much of the day, was reserved for special occasions, and I remember how from time to time Mori-san would summon all his pupils – there were ten of us – into that room whenever he had completed a new painting. (p.138)

The clear parallels between this scene and the earlier scenes with his father alert the reader – if not Ono himself – to the fact that, far from escaping from the Takeda firm into an environment more suited to his artistic identity, ‘Ono has become part of another community that stifles his ambition’¹¹⁹. Under Mori-san’s tutelage, Ono finds himself troubled once again by the uncanny return of his father and of those very values which Ono has defined his artistic-identity against.

Ono’s self-identification as an artist, then, is mediated at every stage, firstly through the structure of the family, then through the Takeda firm and finally through the strictures of Ono’s position as Moriyama’s student. With every step, Ono finds his own artistic ambitions thwarted as the limitations to these artistic goals he endured with his father are replicated by the power relations in the Takeda firm and in Mori-san’s villa. As such, Ono is vulnerable to the very kind of manipulation which comes along in the shape of Chishu Matsuda. Matsuda is a representative of the Okada-

¹¹⁹ McLeod, p.140.

Shingen Society, Ishiguro's fictional rendering of the real-life Nika Society. Ono recalls one occasion where Matsuda takes Ono on a walk through one of the poorer areas of the city:

I noticed three small boys bowed over something on the ground, prodding at it with sticks. As we approached, they spun round with scowls on their faces and although I saw nothing, something in their manner told me they were torturing some animal. Matsuda must have drawn the same conclusion, for he said to me as we walked past: 'Well, they have little else to amuse themselves with around here.' (p.167)

Matsuda leaves little room for doubt as to who he blames for the poverty and dereliction they witness as they walk through the city. 'Politicians and businessmen rarely see places like this. At least, if they do, they stand at a safe distance...' (p.166). Matsuda's objections conform to Ono's own predispositions formed out of the confrontation with his businessman father. Indeed, Ono's immediate reaction to the poverty all around him – 'How terrible ... It makes one want to do something for them.' (p.166) – is entirely consistent with his avowed intention to disprove his father's dismissive opinion of art as a constructive occupation.

The immediate effect of Ono's encounter with the poverty in his own city is to draw him away from the conventions of the 'floating-world' school towards a more politicised style of work, first revealed in the painting 'Complacency':

I gave those boys little further thought at the time. Then some days later, that image of the three of them, turning towards us with scowls on their faces, brandishing their sticks, standing there amidst all that squalor, returned to me with some vividness, and I used it as the central image of 'Complacency'. (pp. 167-8)

However, as Ono points out, he manipulates the image in quite significant ways:

[A]lthough they still stood in front of a squalid shanty hut, and their clothes were the same rags the original boys wore, the scowls on their faces [were] not ... guilty, defensive scowls of little criminals caught in the act; they [were] ... the manly scowls of samurai warriors ready to fight. It is no coincidence, furthermore, that the boys in my picture held their sticks in classic kendo stances. (p.168)

The original scene is further manipulated by 'the painting fading into a second image – that of three fat, well-dressed men, sitting in a comfortable bar laughing together'

(p.168). It thus becomes possible to read in the three well dressed but unsympathetically portrayed men a critique of Ono's relationship with his own businessman father. The two contrasting images augment the sense of a generational conflict, but this time it is the younger generation who cast a disparaging eye over the older.

These two distinct images are framed within an outline of the Japanese coastline, and the painting is completed by two competing legends:

Down the right-hand margin, in bold red characters, is the word 'Complacency'; down the left-hand side, in smaller characters, is the declaration: 'But the young are ready to fight for their dignity. (p.168)

It is clear as to which image the respective legends belong. 'Complacency' may be read as Ono's rebuttal of his father's earlier dismissal of artists. Here, it is the businessmen who are 'weak-willed and depraved', dragging Japan into inexorable decline through their own greed and complacency, whilst it is the young who are ready to fight to restore their nation's dignity. As Charles Sarvan notes, there is a heavily ironic element to the painting's title (although the irony is, of course, lost on Ono); '[t]he title of this complacent canvas in which the dire economic and social conditions are glossed over and facilely made to serve military ends is "Complacency" – and there is an ironic gap between Ono's understanding of this signifier and the reader's recognition of the painter's self-satisfaction and smugness'¹²⁰.

'Complacency' in turn provides the template for another work, produced in the 1930s and entitled 'Eyes to the Horizon'. 'Eyes to the Horizon' marks the final step in the assimilation of Ono's art into a fully political discourse:

¹²⁰ Sarvan, p.98.

[Eyes to the Horizon] also employed two contrasting images merging into one another, bound by the coastline of Japan; the upper image was again that of three well-dressed men conferring, but this time they wore nervous expressions, looking to each other for initiative. And these faces ... resembled those of three prominent politicians. For the lower, more dominant image, the three poverty-stricken boys had become stern-faced soldiers; two of them held bayoneted rifles, flanking an officer who held out his sword, pointing the way forward, west towards Asia. Behind them, there was no longer a backdrop of poverty; simply the military flag of the rising sun. The word 'Complacency' down the right-hand margin had been replaced by 'Eyes to the Horizon!' and on the left-hand side, the message, 'No time for cowardly talking. Japan must go forward!' (pp.168-9)

'Eyes to the Horizon' signals Ono's interpellation into the hegemony of imperialism.

His art takes on a political dimension which is the end result of a series of relationships in which Ono, usually unwittingly, finds his own sense of subjectivity and artistic freedom subsumed within a larger social/political structure. Matsuda, as the latest in a line of mediators that begins with Ono's businessman father and runs through Master Takeda and Moriyama, represents a turn towards imperialism. Matsuda manipulates Ono's prejudices to suggest that the poverty which Ono observes all around him is endemic to the nation as a whole, and is the result of the very type of capitalist behaviour which Ono rallies against as a result of his childhood relationship with his father. All the more alluring for Ono is the fact that Matsuda seems to offer a solution based at least partly in his painting, affording Ono the chance to disprove once and for all his father's dismissal of art as a worthless occupation. Matsuda's influence can be seen all over 'Eyes to the Horizon', from the contrasting images of the nervous business types and the fearless soldiers to the text added by Ono urging action rather than 'cowardly talking'. Matsuda's manipulative influence adds an ideological foundation to Ono's artistic identity, resulting in a subjectivity that is formed out of a complex mixture of Ono's family relationships, the social and historical environment in which he finds himself, and the mediation of the various characters who influence and shape his artistic career.

There is, however, a further potential reading of Ono's work here. I have already drawn attention to the ways in which some of the practices Ono encounters – particularly in his time with the Takeda firm – seem to predict the conditions and rhythms of work which we now associate with contemporary globalism. Recalling the quotation from Ishiguro with which I began this thesis, and in particular his references to 'smugness' and 'the seeds of things that didn't go so well'¹²¹, we might be tempted to read in Ono's career and in particular in the notion of 'complacency' an implicit criticism of the contemporary zeitgeist. That is, the self-congratulatory attitude of the younger generation in post-war Japan might be likened to that prevalent in the later decades of the century, when a growing sense of cosmopolitanism and economic growth is celebrated as a positive and enabling means of coexisting. As such, moments in the novel which appear to undermine the 'new Japan' are likely to be of interest in terms of their contemporary relevance. It is to such moments that I now turn in the final section of my analysis of *Artist*.

An Outcast in the Modern World

In my analysis of *Artist* to date, I have examined the novel's structure and in particular the way in which the secondary narrative reveals the secrets which seem to haunt Ono in the primary narrative. In particular, the device of 'The Bridge of Hesitation' provides a conduit between these two narrative levels, allowing Ono to explore his memories of the decades before the war. Most of these memories are taken up with his development as an artist, from his ideological battle of wills with his businessman father to the ultimate politicisation of his work. It is as a result of this politicisation that he finds himself ostracised in the post-war years, forced onto the defensive as he attempts – in his own mind at least – to defend his reputation and his

¹²¹ Appleyard, p.6.

actions. In the remainder of this chapter, I would like explore the alienation that Ono experiences in the post-war years. Whilst events within the primary narrative suggest that Ono may have overestimated his own influence (thus casting fresh doubt on his narrative of the pre-war years), there remains a case to answer as Ono's interactions with the younger generation raise issues of blame, agency, and historical responsibility.

Ono's process of reflection appears to result in his acceptance of at least some degree of responsibility for the events which befell Japan before, during and after the war. Indeed, at times Ono seems to overstate his own role in the larger political events which took place around him. At Noriko's *miai*, Ono's fears that his past actions may cause the breakdown of the negotiations force him into a justification of these actions, and an unexpected admission of culpability:

‘I freely admit I made many mistakes. I accept that much of what I did was ultimately harmful to our nation, that mine was part of an influence that resulted in untold suffering for our own people. You see ..., I admit this quite readily. All I can say is that at the time I acted in good faith. I believed in all sincerity I was achieving good for my fellow countrymen. But as you see, I am not now afraid to admit I was mistaken’. (pp.123-4)

Ono's admission meets with bemusement from both his own daughters and from the Saito family to whose son Noriko is engaged, suggesting that Ono has grossly overestimated his own influence both in the pre-war years and in the present. Typically, Ono recovers from this embarrassment to claim credit for the successful conclusion of the wedding negotiations, suggesting that his moment of self-flagellation ‘was when the *miai* turned from being an awkward, potentially disastrous one into a successful evening’. (p.124) Nevertheless, as Lewis observes, the somewhat humiliating implication is that ‘[d]espite his efforts to magnify his role in

events, ultimately he was just a minor functionary who is now burdened with an inappropriate sense of guilt'¹²².

That said, despite the Saito family's bemusement, Ono's narrative is sufficiently ambiguous to ensure that he cannot be entirely exonerated. In one early scene, notably juxtaposed with Ono's recollection of his confrontation with his father, Setsuko suggests that Ono might 'take certain precautionary steps' (p.49) to ensure the successful conclusion of her sister's wedding negotiations. In a finely modulated scene, Ono claims not to understand the specific nature of Setsuko's suggestion, whilst Setsuko apologises repeatedly for her inability to 'express things better' (p.49), yet both parties are clearly aware that the other knows exactly what potential 'misunderstandings' Setsuko is referring to. Indeed, it is precisely such precautionary steps which take Ono in search of his former pupil, Kuroda. Once again, it is Setsuko who suggests there may be cause for such a visit, during another delicately nuanced conversation with Ono:

"Forgive me, but I wonder if it may not be wise if Father were to visit Mr Kuroda soon."

"Visit him?"

"Mr Kuroda. And perhaps certain other such acquaintances from the past."

"I'm not sure I follow what you're saying, Setsuko."

"Forgive me, I simply meant to suggest that Father may wish to speak to certain acquaintances from his past. That is to say, before the Saito's detective does. After all, we do not wish any unnecessary misunderstandings to arise."

"No, I suppose we don't," I said, returning to my paper. (p.85)

The narratee disappears, briefly, from the scene, the direct speech simultaneously saying little and revealing much. Beneath the formal tone and the neutral language the implication is clear – Setsuko believes that there are figures from her father's past who must be silenced if her sister's wedding is to be successfully negotiated. At this point in the novel, neither the reader nor the narratee has yet learned of Ono's betrayal of Kuroda. Ishiguro thus heightens the tension by excluding narratee and reader from

¹²² Lewis, p.54.

the secret from Ono's past which both he and Setsuko are aware of but fail to voice explicitly. Importantly, although Ono does indeed attempt to meet with Kuroda, his motivation for this is purely to safeguard his daughter's engagement. As Wong observes, 'Ono shows no remorse for what happened to Kuroda'¹²³, only concern that these past events should not trip up the wedding negotiations.

One further episode from the novel serves to illustrate the ambiguity Ishiguro creates as to the extent of blame attached to Ono. Ono recounts a chance meeting with Jiro Miyake, to whom Noriko had been engaged before the arrangement was mysteriously broken-off by the Miyake family. Typically, Ono succeeds in manipulating this unfortunate event to his own hubristic ends:

My feeling is that it was simply a matter of family status. The Miyakes, from what I saw of them, were just the honest sort who would feel uncomfortable at the thought of their son marrying above his station. (pp.18-9)

Despite this bold assertion, it is the failure of this arrangement – and the underlying suggestion that the sudden termination of the engagement was down to a discovery made by the Miyake family relating to Ono's past – which informs the anxiety felt by both Ono and Setsuko towards the present negotiations with the Saito family. Ono's exchange with Jiro, which takes place before the breakdown of the engagement, is friendly and yet awkward. At one point, Jiro explains that his company president has committed suicide:

“Our President clearly felt responsible for certain undertakings we were involved in during the war. Two senior men were already dismissed by the Americans, but our President obviously felt it was not enough. His act was an apology on behalf of us to all the families of those killed in the war.” (p.55)

Ono's response is more than a little defensive:

“Why, really,” I said, “that seems rather extreme. The world seems to have gone mad. Every day there seems to be a report of someone else killing himself in apology. Tell me, Mr

¹²³ Wong, p.46.

Miyake, don't you find it all a great waste? After all, if your country is at war, you do all you can in support, there's no shame in that. What need is there to apologize by death?" (p.55)

Ono's response raises questions of historical agency but the distinction between his response to the President's *seppuko* and Jiro's assessment that '[i]t was a great thing our President did' (p.55) highlights the generational conflict that has arisen out of Japan's conduct during the war. Furthermore, whilst there is no reason to believe that Jiro is talking about anything other than his President's suicide and the situation at large, Ono's state of mind is such that Jiro's argument appears to contain within it an implicit criticism of Ono's own failure to acknowledge and apologise for his own conduct at that time.

The generational conflict illustrated by Ono and Jiro's contrasting views of the conduct of their nation during the war is one of the key sources of tension in *An Artist of the Floating World*. Lewis observes that '[w]ithin the space of just one generation, the values of Japanese citizens underwent a volte-face'¹²⁴, from the pre-war belief that Japan should actively and aggressively seek its place in the world to the post-war acquiescence and de-militarization overseen by the United States of America. This readiness to accept defeat and to face up to the past is illustrated not only in the character of Jiro but also in the implicit disapproval that underlies Ono's finely nuanced dialogues with Setsuko.

It is important to note, however, that along with change comes continuity. As we have already seen, the key event in the formation of Ono's subjectivity is his confrontation with his father, and their conflicting views as to the relative merits of business and art. The repeated echoing of this scene, firstly with Takeda and later with Moriyama, is a

¹²⁴ Lewis, p.49.

strategic element of Ono's narrative. It might be argued that each of the steps that he takes towards his ultimate involvement with Takeda and the Okada-Shingen society can be traced back to this confrontation with his father, and Ono's subsequent quest to disprove his father's dismissal of art as an occupation without purpose. Reading Ono's narrative in this way, we can identify at the heart of his set of beliefs the self-same generational conflict which informs the post-war generation's suspicion of their elders. As McLeod notes, '[i]ronically, Ono has much in common with the younger Japanese that criticise him, in placing the blame for events squarely at the feet of an earlier generation'¹²⁵. As was the case in *Pale View*, there are no fixed, binary identities which separate and distinguish the generations. Just as Ono's artistic career seems haunted by the spectral presence of his father, so perhaps does the apparent hostility of the younger generation towards Ono's generation emerge out of a recognition of themselves, a return of the gaze.

But what implications does such a reading have as regards the question of historical agency which is raised by Ono's renegotiation of his past? During his conversation with Jiro Miyake, Ono argues that 'those who fought and worked loyally for our country during the war cannot be called war criminals' (p.56). Jiro's response highlights the conflicting views between the generations:

"But these are the men that led the country astray, sir. Surely, it's only right they should acknowledge their responsibility. It's a cowardice that these men refuse to admit to their mistakes. And when those mistakes were made on behalf of the whole country, why then it must be the greatest cowardice of all." (p.56)

It might be argued that Jiro's abhorrence of cowardice suggests continuity with the best traditions of Japanese life, rather than a break or a change. But it also raises fundamental questions regarding the nature of historical agency. To what extent is the

¹²⁵ McLeod, pp.141-142.

individual responsible for the course a nation takes in the larger sweep of historical events? As we have already seen, Ono may at times overestimate the influence that *he* exerted upon the historical moment. However Jiro, as representative of the younger generation, appears to suggest that responsibility does lie with the individual. As Wong points out, this raises a further question: ‘How can a person be certain that the decisions he or she makes at any point in life will yield a favourable outcome, as opposed to a detrimental one?’¹²⁶ It is a question central to Ishiguro’s work and one which – as I shall discuss in the next chapter – leads to further questions as to the individual’s ethical responsibilities in the contemporary, cosmopolitan world.

For now, however, I would like to return by way of conclusion to that final image of Ono standing on the Bridge of Hesitation. Matsuda’s death appears to close that particular unpleasant chapter in Ono’s life and, with Noriko married and settling into motherhood, it does indeed appear that he can consign his past mistakes to history and look ahead into clear blue skies he views from the bridge. However, the ‘two small boys playing with fishing poles’ (p.197) bear an uncomfortable resemblance to the image of the three boys which inspired Ono’s most political and controversial work, suggesting that for Ono, as for the nation as a whole, there can be no complete break with the past. Indeed, there is a strong sense in the novel that Ono – and the rest of his generation – are out of time. The future belongs to the younger generation, the generation which has rejected traditional Japanese values (which are explored in the trajectory of Ono’s artistic career) and has instead embraced the ideology and practices of the conquering Americans and set in motion Japan’s economic recovery and eventual leading role in the global economy of the second half of the twentieth

¹²⁶ Wong, p.42.

century. Yet the novel also plants seeds of doubt as to just how emphatic and absolute that generation's break from the past has been. Echoes of the past - for example in the zeal with which the younger generation go about rebuilding Japan – serve to undermine that positive sense of change, as does the fact that this brave new world excludes those who do not fit in with its ideals. As such, the narrative looks forward to the time of the novel's publication to hint at some of the fault lines running beneath both Japan's status as global economic 'superpower' and the larger sense of globalisation and cosmopolitanism which characterises that time.

Conclusion

In *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, Kazuo Ishiguro introduces many of the themes – historical agency and responsibility, generational conflict, the vagaries of memory – and techniques – dual narrative levels, unreliable narration, the manipulation of genre – which will become familiar throughout his work. In both novels, the temporal distance between primary and secondary narratives serves to emphasise the extent to which their narrator is displaced, alienated and out of time. In *Pale View*, Etsuko's displacement is both temporal and spatial, her recollections of the aftermath of the Nagasaki bomb narrated from the alienating English countryside. These recollections figure the emergence of a new Japan, formed under American influence from the ashes of defeat, and of a commensurate clash of values between the younger and older generations. But the novel's intertextual references to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* point towards a certain clash of cultures which appears to undermine not only the new Japan but also notions of cosmopolitanism and transnational living relevant to the time of the novel's publication. Such notions are further suggested by the novel's adoption of ghost and suicide motifs which hint at Etsuko's alienation in the West and the repressed effects

of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and, in so doing, remind the contemporary reader of the polarisation of the world at the time of the novel's publication. The temporal structure of *Artist* leads to a similar sense of alienation for its narrator, Ono, although in his case he does not even have to leave Japan in order to experience the sensation of displacement. The structural device of 'The Bridge of Hesitation' emphasises the changes Japan has experienced between the primary and secondary narratives but also hints at a degree of continuity, a bridge between past and present, which undermines the apparent rejection of the 'old Japan' implicit in the new American-influenced generation. That new, open and outward-looking Japan is further undermined by the fact that Ono and his generation appear to be excluded, caught hesitating between past and present. The blame and recrimination which leads to this exclusion is explored through the development of Ono's career as an artist. But the results of that career – from familial tensions, through production-line busyness and increasing professional dissatisfaction – resemble many of the features and tensions of modern working life, suggesting a contemporary relevance to Ishiguro's examination of professionalism which I will examine in more detail in the next chapter. Meanwhile, the increasing politicisation of Ono's art reveals the reasons for his increasingly fragile position after the war and stands as metaphor for the larger rejection of the older ideologies by the younger, post-war generation. As was the case with Etsuko in *Pale View*, the primary narrative in *Artist* finds Ono accused, mistrusted and alienated. Both novels may point to a brave new Japan, a Japan which plays a central role in a more cosmopolitan world but they also point to a generation – represented by Etsuko and Ono – who are outcast, outside, and out of time.

Chapter 2

Time Runs Out: *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I read Kazuo Ishiguro's first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, as being structured by a temporal framework which highlighted the extent to which the narrators and other elderly protagonists – Etsuko, Ogata-San, Ono – found themselves 'out of time', in as much as there no longer seemed to be a place for them in the modern, post-war Japan. That is, whilst the secondary narratives in these novels might be characterised by a sense of busyness and agency, the time of the primary narratives is one of relative idleness, stasis, and gentle reflection where the protagonists find themselves on the outside of any changes taking place in the world. Whilst elements of this 'out of time' structure remain in two of Ishiguro's later novels, *The Remains of the Day*¹²⁷ and *When We Were Orphans*¹²⁸, in this chapter I want to suggest that the principal temporal structure in these two novels is one in which there is a strong sense of time running out.

Much of this sense of urgency arises from the attempts being made by the protagonists in both novels to help avert the outbreak of the Second World War. In *Remains*, much of Stevens's secondary narrative – in which he recalls his years of service as butler to Lord Darlington – is concerned with the preparations for and successful running of two major conferences staged by Darlington in a well-meaning but politically naïve attempt to engender rapprochement between Germany and the Allies and thus avert the outbreak of war. Similarly, *Orphans* is concerned with the increasingly frantic efforts of the novel's narrator, Christopher Banks, to use his

¹²⁷ Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber, 1989). All further page references from this edition.

¹²⁸ Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (London: Faber, 2001). All further page references from this edition.

professional abilities as a celebrated London detective to intervene in the rising tensions in Shanghai and, in so doing, to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War in that particular Eastern theatre.

Parallel to these professional concerns, each novel also stages a race against time in the protagonists' personal lives. In *Remains*, the urgency attached to this personal quest is perhaps less immediately noticeable. However, in the novel's primary narrative Stevens's apparently sedate progress across southern England is revealed to be a race to reach Miss Kenton, former housemaid at Darlington Hall, and to attempt to put right their unfulfilled love before it is finally and definitively 'too late'. Similarly, in *Orphans*, Banks's intervention in the crisis zone of Shanghai is a race against time not only to avert war but also to find his parents, presumed kidnapped several decades earlier, again before it is 'too late'. That in both cases the reader can see what the protagonists cannot, namely that in these personal quests they are already long out of time, points to the irony created by the gap between the time of the narrated events and the time of the reader. That ironic knowledge is also present in terms of the reader's knowledge that the protagonists' attempts to avert the war are doomed to inevitable failure, problematising the actions of these narrators and their subsequent memories of the period, and drawing attention also to the manipulation of the narrative by the author, and to the gap between that moment of authorship and the times of narration and of the narrated events.

In this chapter, I will examine the temporal structure of each novel, suggesting that the 'time runs out' motif invites an interpretation of these novels which looks both backwards *and* forwards in time. In particular I will suggest that both novels examine

the role and nature of organised Western intervention in global crises in such a way as to give them both a historical resonance and a contemporary relevance. Both novels are thus read as commentaries on the ethical and political dilemmas which face organisations and individuals in the face of wars or other crises which occur outwith or across national boundaries. More broadly, however, the novels also comment on the contemporary global condition, reflecting and interrogating the society in which they were produced and read.

The Remains of the Day

In the opening lines of *The Remains of the Day* the narrator, Mr Stevens, announces that '[i]t seems increasingly likely that I really will undertake the expedition that has been preoccupying my imagination now for some days' (p.3). We quickly discover that Stevens is referring to a planned trip across the West Country but his framing of this trip in terms of 'undertak[ing]' an 'expedition', and the manner in which this matter has preoccupied his mind for a number of days, infuse the proposed journey with a sense of urgency belied by the somewhat sedate progress that he will ultimately make. It is, in its ambiguity, an apt beginning to a novel which in each of its narrative strands attests to a sense of urgency and busyness which, ultimately, appears to achieve very little. In the primary narrative, set over a handful of days in July 1956, that sense of urgency is attributed to Mr Stevens's car journey across southern England, the true purpose of which quickly emerges. Stevens journeys to Cornwall in the hope of persuading the former housekeeper, Miss Kenton (now Mrs Benn), to return to Darlington Hall with him, ostensibly as a ready-made solution for the staffing shortages which are in need of urgent rectification but, in reality, in a belated attempt to consummate a mutual but unacknowledged love which dates back to the period of the secondary narrative. Stevens has received a letter from Miss Kenton

informing him of the troubled state of her marriage and hinting at a desire to return to Darlington Hall. As he plods towards her, Stevens's recollections of his (strictly professional) relationship with Miss Kenton provide a metaleptic bridge back into the novel's secondary narrative, set during Darlington Hall's heyday in the inter-war years. Like the primary narrative, this secondary narrative is characterised by a growing sense of urgency as Lord Darlington, and by proxy Stevens, engages in a process of rapprochement with Germany and, in so doing, attempts to avert the outbreak of the Second World War. That the reader can clearly see that the urgent agendas of both narrative threads are doomed to failure draws attention to the time in which the novel was written (and subsequently read), and to the privileged historical position of both reader and author. In *The Remains of the Day*, then, Ishiguro is concerned with three distinct and yet related historical periods: the 1950s of the primary narrative (and more precisely the key historical moment of July 1956); the 1920s and 1930s of the secondary narrative; and the period from the mid-1980s onwards in which the novel was produced and read. My analysis will consider each in turn.

1950s

The primary narrative of *Remains* covers around a week in July 1956 and comprises Stevens's travelogue of his trip across the south of England. I shall discuss the significance of this precise temporal setting shortly. Firstly, however, it is instructive to note the very precise language in which Stevens chooses to frame his journey. Caren Kaplan reminds us that 'the emergence of terms of travel and displacement...in contemporary criticism must be linked to the histories of the production of colonial

discourses.’¹²⁹ As such, terms such as ‘journey’ (p.3), ‘trip’ (p.10), and ‘motoring trip’ (p.12) invoke the notion of travel for leisure, recalling perhaps the bourgeois classes of the Victorian era setting off on grand tours of the continent and engendering the sense of Stevens as an ‘innocent abroad’, a sense reflected by Stevens himself in his admission that he is ‘something of a novice’ (p.160) when it comes to travel. But such a reading offers a further point of note. As James Clifford observes, ‘Victorian bourgeois travelers...were usually accompanied by servants [who] have never achieved the status of “travelers”.’¹³⁰ Whilst many Victorian travellers recorded their experiences - whether publicly or privately - the voices and experiences of the serving class who accompanied them were rarely heard. Ishiguro neatly subverts traditional notions of travel writing by making heard the voice of one such traveller, by allowing a servant to step out of the background and to record the cross-cultural experiences that follow. Despite the fact that Stevens undertakes the journey alone, rather than as part of a grand retinue, there remains nevertheless something of the Victorian traveller in the ways in which he sets about and describes his journey. The invocation this Victorian tone will prove to be in keeping with the novel’s exposition of its own historical moment in the 1980s, a point to which I will return later.

Much of Stevens’s terminology, then, invokes a certain type of voyage and gives expression to a previously unheard travelling experience. Far more loaded, however, is the term ‘expedition’ (p.3), employed twice by Stevens in the opening lines of the novel and repeated at intervals throughout. ‘Expedition’ suggests exploration, discovery, conquest, endowing Stevens’s journey with something of an imperial overtone. There is thus a suggestion that Stevens’s voyage is something rather grander

¹²⁹ Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p.2.

¹³⁰ Clifford, p.106.

than the reality would suggest. He frequently describes driving across different counties in terms of crossing borders¹³¹, terminology more suited to the excitement and vitality of transnational travel than a leisurely drive across country. Stevens's choice of terminology is part of a larger pattern in which the domestic gives way to a broader international significance: as Sim suggests, the 'juxtaposing of the foreign and the local takes place throughout the novel'¹³². As such, there is a sense from the outset that Stevens's journey, and the ways in which he describes it, contain a significance beyond the country lanes and county boundaries which he traverses in the course of the primary narrative.

Nevertheless, it hardly seems an epic voyage of colonisation or discovery which he embarks upon. Indeed, so insular is his outlook that when Mr Farraday, the new American owner of Darlington Hall, first suggests the trip, Stevens comments that there is little need since '[i]t has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years...within these very walls.' (p.4) Stevens's response invokes nostalgia for the halcyon days of Darlington Hall but it also recalls Tomlinson's suggestion that the 'paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people [...] is that of staying in one place but experiencing the "displacement" that global modernity *brings to them*'¹³³. Here, again, is the suggestion that Stevens's distinctly local tale has some wider significance. The purview, however, remains limited – Stevens's reference to the best of *England* suggests a very specific sense of identity which will be both repeated and challenged as the novel progresses.

¹³¹ for examples see p.47, p.117, p.211.

¹³² Sim, p.137.

¹³³ Tomlinson, p.9.

The physical and temporal space travelled by Stevens also appears to make transnational readings of his narrative problematic. The week-long journey from Cambridgeshire to Cornwall is modest even by the austere standards of the 1950s. Yet here again, Stevens's narrative has the sense of something larger about it. His reaction to leaving familiar climes behind is telling:

...eventually the surroundings grew unrecognizable and I knew I had gone beyond all previous boundaries. I have heard people describe the moment, when setting sail in a ship, when one finally loses sight of the land. I imagine the experience of unease mixed with exhilaration often described in connection with this moment is very similar to what I felt...as the surroundings grew strange around me...The feeling swept over me that I had truly left Darlington Hall behind, and I must confess I did feel a slight sense of alarm – a sense aggravated by the feeling that I was perhaps...speeding off...into a wilderness. (pp.23-24)

The sense of discomfort and displacement which Stevens experiences (some twenty minutes after departing at a stately pace from Darlington Hall) is redolent of an expedition more far-flung and fraught with danger than that which he undertakes. His references to 'boundaries' and 'wilderness' are particularly interesting, recalling both the earlier references to border-crossings and Bhabha's interstitial sites of resistance and negotiation. The implication is that Stevens's cross-country excursion brings him into contact with cultures from which he has previously been separated both spatially and temporally, and which may serve to challenge his own notions of national and personal identity.

At first, however, Stevens appears untroubled by any such challenge to his firmly fixed notions. Early in his journey he encounters a view which represents, in Stevens's eyes, all that is good about the English countryside:

What I saw was principally field upon field rolling off into the far distance. The land rose and fell gently, and the fields were bordered by hedges and trees. There were dots in some of the distant fields which I assumed to be sheep. To my right, almost on the horizon, I thought I could see the square tower of a church (p.26).

There is a certain contingency to Stevens's view of the landscape in his 'assumption' of certain components, or in the fact he 'thinks' he sees certain features, perhaps

hinting at a similar contingency to his narrative as a whole. As John McLeod observes, ‘Stevens adds to his views these small details to recreate an idealised picture of the English countryside...The view he seeks does not quite exist before his eyes’¹³⁴. Stevens seeks a mythical or vanished England, and hence must anxiously supplement the landscape in order to resist the changes that have taken place and to reinforce his own notion of identity and ‘Englishness’.

The use of the countryside as a verdant symbol of national identity acquires a more sinister tone as Stevens reflects, later that day, on what precisely makes Great Britain ‘great’:

I would say that it is the very *lack* of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of the beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it. In comparison, the sort of sights offered in such places as Africa and America, though undoubtedly very exciting, would, I’m sure, strike the objective viewer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness (p.29).

Stevens’s view is clearly preposterous. Indeed, it would perhaps be amusing were it not for the fact that it leads into a meditation on why only an Englishman can make a great butler:

Continentalers are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of. Continentalers – and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree – are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion, and are thus unable to maintain a professional demeanour... (p.43).

When juxtaposed with his views of what makes a good butler, Stevens’s earlier interpretation of the English countryside makes for uncomfortable reading. As Barry Lewis argues, ‘[t]he “objective viewer” appealed to [in Stevens’s description of the countryside] is anything but [objective]: he is English, white, associated with the upper class, a nationalist and imperialist prone to bouts of self-glorifying hyperbole –

¹³⁴ McLeod, p.153.

in short, he is Stevens himself¹³⁵. The implication is that Stevens is representative of that very white nationalist upper-class (an implication made somewhat problematic by the fact he is – or rather was - in reality a servant to that class) and that the assumptions upon which this identity is built will be challenged as his journey progresses.

The mythical landscape invoked by Stevens, then, forms part of a particular pedagogical construct of Britain, or more particularly England, which ties in with a sense of nostalgia for certain kind of untarnished rural England first encountered, briefly, in the shape of Nikki's visit to Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills* and which will be present again in *When We Were Orphans*. As Ishiguro himself notes, it is a 'vision of England that actually does play a large role in the political imaginations of a lot of people, not just British people but people around the world'¹³⁶. As such, Ishiguro's invocation, and indeed, subsequent subversion of that vision of England would appear to endow the novel with something of a political purpose. In this regard, much has been made about the primary narrative's setting against the backdrop of the Suez Crisis and about the significance of both that event and of the particular type of England satirised by Ishiguro in relation to the time of the novel's publication in the 1980s. I shall return to both shortly. In the meantime, however, far less has been made of the ways in which Stevens's views of England and the English in the primary narrative might relate back to the events described in the secondary narrative. Yet, it is precisely this vision of England that appears to be 'at stake' in the years leading up to the outbreak of war. It is instructive to turn to the autobiography of perhaps the most infamous supporter of appeasement, Lord Halifax, who features in the novel in

¹³⁵ Lewis, pp.79-80.

¹³⁶ Suanne Kelman, 'Ishiguro in Toronto' in *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*, ed. by Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F. Wong, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), p.46.

an “‘off the record” visit to the house’ (p.135) to attend a meeting, brokered by Darlington, with the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. In his memoir, *Fulness of Days*, Halifax recalls taking in a view close to his Yorkshire home shortly after the fall of France:

All the landscape of the nearer foreground was familiar – its sights, its sounds, its smells; hardly a field that did not call up some half-forgotten bit of association...Here in Yorkshire was a true fragment of the undying England, like the white cliffs of Dover, or any other part of our land that Englishmen have loved. Then the question came, is it possible that the Prussian jackboot will force its way into this countryside to tread and trample over it at will?¹³⁷

The similarities between Halifax’s commentary and that of Stevens are striking: here again is the invocation of the countryside as a kind of metaphor for all that is ‘great’ about Britain. Here again also is that same emphasis on *England*, that same implicit rejection of the Celtic fringes which pins down Stevens’s sense of identity but which also traces the fault lines in British identity which will become more significant in the latter part of the century through devolution and growing claims of independence from the London centre. Given the similarities between the titles of Halifax’s memoir and Ishiguro’s novel, the proximity between the publication of Halifax’s biography in 1957 and Stevens’s road trip in 1956, and the striking similarities in tone and narrative voice between the two books, it is difficult for the reader not to see parallels between Halifax’s memoir and Stevens’s narrative in *Remains*. As such, the reader is invited to read Stevens’s description of the English countryside in part at least as a bridge back into the novel’s secondary narrative, which is concerned with the same historical events as are central to Halifax’s memoir.

Clearly, then, Stevens embarks on his journey with a secure sense of identity in place. Of the early part of his trip, it is perhaps only the passing mention that ‘[s]trange beds

¹³⁷ Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, Earl of Halifax, *Fulness of Days* (London: Collins, 1957), p.215.

have rarely agreed with me' (p.47) which alerts us to the bumps on the road ahead. The first of these bumps comes in an encounter with a servant who helps Stevens with the stricken Ford (ever the inexperienced traveller, Stevens has allowed the radiator to run dry). In a situation which mirrors – and puts into perspective – the staffing shortages at Darlington Hall, the man turns out to be 'butler, valet, chauffeur and general cleaner' (p.119) to a retired Colonel. Significantly, '[h]e had been the Colonel's batman in the war...; they had been in Belgium together when the Germans had invaded and they had been together again for the Allied landing.' (p.119) The multi-tasking batman's courageous service alongside his Colonel contrasts sharply with Stevens's acquiescence with Lord Darlington's policy of pacifism and appeasement towards Germany, offering an alternative vision of how one might act in the name of one's country and perhaps causing Stevens to begin to doubt his own previously fixed and unyielding notions of national and personal identity.

Such doubts are further raised the following evening, when Stevens finds himself lodged in an inn outside Taunton. In the bar, Stevens encounters several of the local residents. These locals are portrayed by Stevens as simplistic 'others': he 'guess[es] from their appearance they [are] agricultural people of one sort or another' (p.129) whilst traditional stereotypes of the insular village community are confirmed when it becomes evident 'that these local people were perturbed by my presence' (p.129). In an ill-advised attempt to alleviate tensions, Stevens engages in an excruciating witticism which serves first to silence the locals and then to cause them to laugh 'in a somewhat bemused fashion' (p.130). The sleepless night which ensues illustrates the way in which Stevens's experiences become progressively more troubling as his journey advances. This is perhaps emphasised by the fact that Stevens recounts these

experiences the following morning from the safety of a guest house and tea-room in Taunton which, he reflects, may have made a more suitable lodging for the night. Significantly, although he estimates that the tea-room itself might accommodate upwards of twenty people (his profession having left him with the habit of instantly assessing the capacity of any room he enters), that morning his ‘only companions are two elderly ladies...and a man-perhaps a retired farmer...’ (p.132) For Stevens, comfort comes in empty rooms and private counsel.

Such comforts evade Stevens the following evening when, having once again demonstrated his naivety as a traveller by running out of petrol, he is forced to spend the night in the village of Moscombe. Like those he has encountered earlier in his journey, the locals mistake Stevens for a gentleman. Stevens, whilst not exactly endorsing this misapprehension, does nothing to correct it, eagerly entering into a discussion as to what ‘makes’ a gentleman. For Stevens, the topic represents an opportunity to return to his discourse on ‘greatness’ and ‘Englishness’; the explanation he offers the villagers is that such qualities boil down to the possession of ‘dignity’. Stevens’s notion meets with the approval of most of the villagers of Moscombe, but not that of the firebrand Harry Smith. Smith’s definition of dignity differs pointedly from that of Stevens. For Stevens, dignity is the quality which sets a gentleman apart from the common man. Smith, on the other hand, claims (in a dialogue which recalls the military service of the Colonel’s batman) that ‘[d]ignity isn’t just something gentleman have. Dignity’s something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get [...] That’s what we fought Hitler for after all. If Hitler had his way, we’d just be slaves now. [...] And I don’t need to remind anyone here, there’s no dignity to be had in being a slave’ (pp.185-6). As Webley observes,

the moment marks a transitional moment in history: ‘Stevens, as the embodiment of a hegemony in which “dignity” means unquestioning obedience to one’s superiors and the perfect fulfilment of one’s duties, comes into direct confrontation with the opinions of...a working class man’¹³⁸. The episode might usefully be framed according to Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of ‘contact zones’ which bring together ‘subjects previously separated by geographical *and historical* disjunctures’¹³⁹. Previously, Stevens has been separated from the villagers of Moscombe not only in terms of the physical distance between the village and Darlington Hall but also temporally, by the very different attitudes and historical purviews to which each subscribe. These contradictory histories clash in the ‘contact zone’, resulting in a loosening of the grip of each. The effect upon Stevens is marked; Harry Smith’s view directly challenges Stevens’s own identity by questioning whether it is possible to possess the quality of dignity, the quality by which Stevens defines himself, whilst being a servant to others. The implication for Stevens of his clash with Harry Smith is that he is representative of a way of life whose time has more or less expired, that Stevens’s day (like that of Etsuko and Ono) is in the past. It is to that past that I will now turn.

1920s/1930s

I began this chapter by suggesting that *Remains* is characterised by a sense of time running out. One thing which appears to be at stake in the primary narrative is a particular version, or vision, of England. Just as the sun is setting on the British Empire in the unspoken backdrop to Stevens’s journey, so time is running out for that particular version of English identity which Stevens seeks to defend and which he

¹³⁸ Webley, 2006.

¹³⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.7 – my emphasis.

identifies in the countryside he travels through. Whilst this may seem to suggest a potential engagement with a cosmopolitanism which lies in the future of the novel, it is notable that the challenges to Stevens's fixed notions of English-ness come from other white English folk. I shall later argue that this is in keeping with the novel's examination of 1980s Britain. Meanwhile, in order to explore the novel's more overt treatment of transnationalism, we must turn to the secondary narrative, which centres upon Stevens's recollections of his service to Lord Darlington in the 1920s and 1930s, and upon the latter's efforts to broach peace with Germany before the world is plunged into global crisis.

Whilst history has come to judge the appeasement movement of the inter-war years unsympathetically (a point to which I will return shortly), Ishiguro complicates the matter by showing Lord Darlington's pacifist tendencies to be ethically grounded. It is his innate sense of gentlemanly conduct which leads to his view that 'fair play had not been done at Versailles' (p.75). In particular, his values stem from his friendship with the lately deceased German aristocrat Herr Bremann, a friendship which predates and survives the war. As Sim suggests therefore, Lord Darlington's dalliance with fascism has a moral basis which echoes that of Ono's ideological conversion in *An Artist of the Floating World* in that it has its roots in a desire to see justice done to those who have been cast into poverty¹⁴⁰. But this desire does not extend to *all* who find themselves impoverished. If Lord Darlington's concern arises in part out of a sense of fair play, it is also influenced by a desire to protect the class system, by recognition of a horizontal comradeship with his opposite number who, in opposing Darlington on the battlefield, was merely 'a gentleman doing his job' (p.73). As Robbins suggests

¹⁴⁰ Sim, p.127.

‘Lord Darlington’s cosmopolitanism...stems from his aristocratic status; rather than indifference, it expresses a positive solidarity with his German fellow aristocrats that’s more compelling to him than the interests he shares with fellow Englishmen of the lower orders’¹⁴¹. Those fellow Englishmen of the lower orders include, of course, Stevens, thus questioning the wisdom of the latter’s blind acquiescence to a man whose ideology seeks to keep the class to which Stevens belongs in a state of subservience. Further, if this is a form of cosmopolitanism that Lord Darlington displays, it is a long way off the positive, enabling vision of cosmopolitanism that is common today; here is a cosmopolitanism whose aim is to maintain the iniquitous status quo rather than to uproot it.

Nevertheless, during the inter-war years, Darlington Hall represents a place of cosmopolitan exchange; visitors in the 1920s and 1930s range from British Government representatives such as Lord Halifax and Nazi officials like Ribbentrop through to ‘figures such as Lord Daniels, Mr John Maynard Keynes, and Mr H. G. Wells, the renowned author’ (p.74). Never is the sense of Darlington Hall as a trans-national melting-pot more clearly illustrated than in the international conference hosted there in 1923. By the time the conference begins Darlington Hall is, in Stevens’s own words, ‘filled with people of all nationalities’ (p.88). This early and unofficial league of nations comes together with the aim of ‘discuss[ing] the means by which the harshest terms of the Versailles treaty could be revised.’ (p.75) Despite warm statements of unity, however, the conference ends on a note of discord as the American delegate, Lewis, dismisses Lord Darlington, insisting that ‘[Darlington] is an amateur and international affairs today are no longer for gentleman amateurs.’

¹⁴¹ Robbins, p.426.

(p.102) On one level, Lewis simply draws attention to a fact that the reader understands but which the delegates cannot yet be aware of (although the ironic gap between reader and narrator is closed since Stevens, recalling these events some decades later, *is* aware of the outcome) – their efforts, well intentioned though they may be, are doomed to failure. Aside from the ironic effect, however, Lewis also draws attention to the changing shape of international relations in the inter-war years, to the increasing globalisation of world affairs, and to the increasingly anachronistic position of the gentleman amateur in that troubled time. But he also questions and interrogates the role and nature of organised transnational intervention in world crises. In particular, he draws attention to the trend which will emerge over what remains of the century, one in which intervention and global crisis management are increasingly taken out of the hands of individuals and of individual states, becoming instead the preserve of the professional organisation, often political but equally often commercial and usually every bit as motivated by self interest and preservation as the gentleman amateurs seeking to maintain their privileged place in interwar Europe.

Bruce Robbins reads professionalism, and in particular that professional harriedness which he terms the ‘very busy just now’ moment, as one of the key features of *Remains* and other Ishiguro novels, one which reaches forward as part of the novel’s cosmopolitan agenda: ‘The “very busy just now” moment in *Remains of the Day* (sic)...stages the intrusion of work into the intimate sphere of the family...this somewhat anachronistic intrusion has an obvious basis in the late twentieth century integration of capitalism on a global scale’¹⁴². Whilst such analysis might appear to fit in with common interpretations of the novel as representing the case against

¹⁴² Robbins, p.428.

cosmopolitanism and globalisation by criticising the tendency towards privileging professionalism over familial concerns, Robbins reads against the grain to suggest that Stevens's commitment to work is, simultaneously, a commitment *to* the cosmopolitan:

[s]kipping forward in time, one is tempted to say that doing your job competently has become the modern equivalent of feudalism's pre-national gentility. For it too overrides the moral obligations of national membership by conferring the moral privilege of *trans*-national membership...One can speculate, in other words, that professionalism has replaced aristocracy in providing a social glue and ethical grounding for cosmopolitanism. Stevens's quasi-feudal relationship with his Lord (Darlington) thus stands as metaphor for the relationship most people have today with their employer.¹⁴³

Thus, for example, Stevens's decision to continue to attend to Lord Darlington's conference guests downstairs whilst his father lies dying upstairs is read not as a terrible moment of self-abnegation but, rather, as one of heroic commitment to both professionalism and, consequently, to the cosmopolitan. It is difficult, however, to see much positive in such a commitment. Robbins suggestion that 'the erotically unconsummated affection between the butler and Miss Kenton, a relationship between colleagues that will not lead to marriage and children, exemplifies a characteristic professional affectivity, an affectivity that substitutes recruitment for reproduction and that has come to assume a larger and larger place in our lives, in our narratives, and not coincidentally in the fashioning of global or transnational subjects',¹⁴⁴ seems depressingly dystopian in its outlook, suggesting that if we are to read the commitment to the professional in *Remains*, *Orphans* and other Ishiguro novels as an escape both from family and from the national into the all embracing arms of the cosmopolitan, then that cosmopolitan world appears to be a less than desirable one. Despite Robbins's claims to the contrary, it appears hugely difficult to read much if anything of a positive nature into the commitment to the professional demonstrated by Stevens in the secondary narrative of *Remains*, or indeed by any of the other protagonists encountered in this thesis.

¹⁴³ Robbins, p.427.

¹⁴⁴ Robbins, p.432.

Instead, Stevens's unquestioning acquiescence to Lord Darlington raises questions of guilt, historical responsibility and agency. In one particularly telling episode, Stevens blindly obeys Lord Darlington's instruction to dismiss two Jewish maids. Much of the criticism of Stevens as someone complicit with the rise of the Nazis in the 1920s and 1930s centres upon this incident. James Lang, for example, describes the action as 'manifestly wrong'¹⁴⁵ and, working through Michael Bernstein's theory of 'backshadowing', suggests that such a reading 'would critique Stevens and Darlington for not foreseeing the Holocaust in the 1930s, and consequently for facilitating dialogues with Nazis'¹⁴⁶. Yet I would suggest that this episode is often misread. Whilst it is perhaps convenient to cite the maids' dismissal in order to support the case that Lord Darlington is an 'open anti-semite'¹⁴⁷, and to damn Stevens by association, little attention is paid to the fact that Darlington is later shown to deeply regret and attempt to reverse the decision, or to the fact that Stevens is equally quick to agree with and attempt to facilitate that decision also. Rather than condemning both men as pro-Nazi, I read the Jewish maid incident as presenting both Darlington and Stevens as naïve and easily led – Darlington for falling briefly under the spell of Mrs Carolyn Barnett, a prominent British fascist and visitor to Darlington Hall and Stevens for abnegating all moral responsibility in his blind obedience to his employer's wishes. Stevens himself neatly summarises in a moment of epiphany towards the end of the novel, '[Lord Darlington] chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that...I can't even say I made my own mistakes' (p.243).

¹⁴⁵ James M. Lang, 'Public Memory, Private History: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*', *CLIO – A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History* 29.2 (Winter 2000) p.158.

¹⁴⁶ Lang, p.154.

¹⁴⁷ Robbins, p.426.

If, ultimately, little historical blame may be attached to Stevens, the question of his guilt does at least force consideration of a larger exploration of one pedagogical construct of nation which *does* seem to have been accepted with little interrogation, the narrative in which those who supported appeasement before the war are held to be anti-heroic. In the years leading up to that conflict, however, the policy of rapprochement had far wider support than is recognised in what has become the official narrative of the War. As such, and as Lang's adoption of the notion of 'backshadowing' suggests, the interpretation of such events within the novel draws attention to the gap between the time of the narrated events and the time of the reader. As Wall explains, '[w]e are asked...to apply our own knowledge to the historical events to which Stevens refers, and thereby to evaluate for ourselves the effectiveness of Lord Darlington's career, upon which Stevens's sense of his own worth is precariously constructed'¹⁴⁸. Further subtlety is added to the complex temporal relationships between the different narrative levels by the fact that in the primary narrative 'Stevens himself is aware of the historical outcome, an awareness he later articulates on several occasions when he acknowledges matter-of-factly that his Lordship's efforts were misguided'¹⁴⁹. The gap between the primary and secondary narratives, then, serves to emphasise that which is elided from the novel but which nevertheless hangs over each of its narrative levels, namely the Second World War. But Ishiguro's knowing manipulation of the reader's privileged knowledge also suggests that it is necessary to read the novel in a late-twentieth century context. The remainder of my analysis will thus focus on the relationship between *Remains* and the time of its publication.

¹⁴⁸ Kathleen Wall, 'The Remains of the Day And Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 24.1 (Winter 1994), p.28.

¹⁴⁹ Wall, pp. 28-29.

1980s

I have already suggested, in my analysis of the two principle narrative strands, some of the ways in which *Remains* relates to the time period in which it was written and published. The seeds of a more contemporary relevance may be traced in the novel's frequent invocation of Victorian attitudes and themes, in the very deliberate choice of date for Stevens's journey, and in the harriedness Stevens experiences as a result of his commitment to work. In this final part of my analysis of *Remains* I will explore each of these factors in turn, as well as examining the significant role played by the novel's two American characters, Senator Lewis and Mr Farraday.

At certain points in this chapter I have referred to the Victorian tone which recurs throughout the novel, most notably in the language which Stevens employs in narrating his trip and in his adherence to the strict hierarchical structure at Darlington Hall. But such references appear to cast their glance back in time from the moment of narration. To what extent might they also look forward, to the moment of the novel's publication? As Wei-Chew Sim has demonstrated, *Remains* on one level reflects the central tenets of the incumbent Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher, particularly in relation to references to 'greatness' and a return to 'Victorian values', both of which were central themes of successful election campaigns during the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵⁰ That is, in Stevens's meditations on 'greatness' and in the novel's frequent allusions to Victorian sensibilities, Ishiguro taps into the zeitgeist and explores issues which resonate loudly with the time and place of the novel's publication.

¹⁵⁰ Sim, pp.121-143.

As such, the nature of the challenge to Stevens's notions of Britishness becomes significant. If Harry Smith represents, for Stevens, a menacing 'other', he is at least a comfortably recognisable 'other', still identifiably 'like' Stevens in both appearance and in terms of his Western sensibilities, if not his values. The same might be said of Stevens's new employer, the American Farraday. If we are to read *Remains* in terms of its relevance to the time of its publication, then we must confront the noticeable absence, at least on the surface of the novel, of the non-white, non-Western 'other'.

For Sim, *Remains*:

asks whether those ideologies and political processes that seek to put the "Great" back into "Britain" entail just the kind of rabid Othering that Stevens undertakes here; whether this ushers out of its imagined community other emergent ethnicities or "new" identities; and it asks whether support for these processes puts individuals on a slippery slope aligning them with new rightist exclusions and stereotypes, thus endorsing a residual animus against officially designated Others.¹⁵¹

That is, the novel draws attention to a pedagogical construct of national identity pertinent to the 1980s which excludes the history of Empire (or at least aspects of it) and the presence of inward immigrants from that Empire in contemporary Britain. Widening the scope, it figures Britain's place in the world in that particular time – broadly anti-Europe, pro-American, and part of the larger North-South divide which, as numerous critics argue, has come to replace ancient divisions of East and West as the dominant geo-cultural model for the late twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries¹⁵².

This post-colonial context is further supported by the very carefully chosen timeframe within which Stevens undertakes his journey across England. The primary narrative is set over six days in July 1956, meaning that the unspoken historical backdrop to Stevens's journey is the unfolding Suez Crisis: in July 1956, Egyptian President

¹⁵¹ Sim, pp.124-125.

¹⁵² See for example Brennan p.5, Bain p.240.

Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, setting in motion a series of events which would culminate in the failed attempt by the British and French to re-take the canal. As Salman Rushdie observes, ‘the Suez debacle marked the end of a certain kind of Britain whose passing is a subject of the novel.’¹⁵³ Thus, just as Stevens is finding a mythical ‘greatness’ in the English landscape, events beyond the space of the narrative bear witness to the fact that time is fast running out on the kind of England which Stevens attempts to describe and with which he identifies.

Nor can Stevens prevent that outside empire from intruding upon his narrative. For one thing, the bonds of empire may be traced in light of the relationship he describes with Lord Darlington. Susie O’Brien suggests that ‘Stevens’s unquestioning submission to [the] social order...reflects and supports the model of filial devotion deployed by empire to mask the enforced servitude of its colonies’¹⁵⁴. But Britain’s buried imperial past returns to haunt Stevens’s narrative in other ways too. Stevens attempts to illustrate his discourse on ‘greatness’ by relating three anecdotes, each of which concerns his father. Indeed, as an aside, readings of the novel which criticise Stevens for abnegating his personal duties in the name of the professional often fail to acknowledge that such criticism is complicated by the fact that Stevens appears to hold his father up as the model of the standards he himself aims to achieve (in sharp contrast to the relationship between Ono and his father in *Artist*) and aids his father in deceiving Lord Darlington by helping his father to cover up the diminishing of his physical ability to carry out his duties. Two of the three anecdotes which Stevens cites have a colonial context. In the first of these, Stevens’s father describes an

¹⁵³ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticisms 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1992), p.246.

¹⁵⁴ Susie O’Brien, ‘Serving a New World Order: Postcolonial Politics in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*’, *Modern Fiction Studies* 42:4 (1996), p.790.

incident in which a butler (who may or may not be Stevens Senior himself) in service in India removes a tiger which has found its way beneath the dining room table shortly before dinner is to be served, calmly announcing to his master that '[d]inner will be served at the usual time and I am pleased to say there will be no discernible traces left of the recent occurrence by that time' (p.36). The second example displays an even greater degree of calm dignity and commitment to the professional, and concerns the visit of a general to the home in which Mr Stevens Senior was butler. The general had been directly responsible for the needless death of several of his men during the Boer War, amongst them the butler's son (Stevens's elder brother). Despite this, Mr Stevens Senior was able to put personal feelings aside to such an extent that 'the General had actually complimented Mr John Silvers on the excellence of his butler and had left an unusually large tip in appreciation – which my father without hesitation asked his employers to donate to a charity' (p.42). The 'outside' or the 'international', in the shape of the Boer War in this example, and the Raj in the previous one, come to haunt Stevens's discourse so that, as Sim suggests, 'Stevens's own narrative undermines his efforts to align "emotional restraint" with a quasi-mythical notion of belonging arising indelibly from a domestic landscape'¹⁵⁵.

Another way in which the international encroaches on the domestic is in the shape of Darlington Hall's new owner, the American Mr Halliday. Indeed, the road trip around which the novel is constructed is made possible only by the liberal attitude of the new owner, the American Mr Farraday, who suggests the trip and lends Stevens his Ford motor car, even offering to 'foot the bill for the gas' (p.4). As O'Brien suggests, this simple act of apparent kindness highlights the changing world order which Stevens

¹⁵⁵ Sim, p.134.

finds himself swept up with: '[e]ven the suggestion of leisure implied by the very idea of a holiday is inimical to the principle of self abnegation to which Stevens has thus far unwaveringly adhered'¹⁵⁶. Such a blurring of the strict social boundaries between master and servant would have been unthinkable before the war, when Stevens and Lord Darlington enjoyed a very different kind of relationship. The sense of displacement and discomfort experienced by Stevens as a result of this new regime is encapsulated in his troubled attempts to master the art of bantering. At the beginning of the novel, Stevens outlines the difficulty he is experiencing in coming to terms with this unfamiliar mode of expression:

...bantering on my new employer's part has characterized much of our relationship over these months – though I must confess, I remain rather unsure as to how I should respond. In fact, during my first days under Mr Farraday, I was once or twice *quite astounded* by some of the things he would say to me (pp.14-15 – my emphasis).

Ironically, in treating Stevens in a less rigid and authoritarian manner than did the late Lord Darlington, Farraday places the butler firmly in the position of subaltern, disorientated and powerless. As Lilian Furst observes of Stevens, '[h]is difficulty in dealing with his new American master's tendency to "bantering" and his own perplexed inability to respond in a similarly relaxed manner is symptomatic of his embeddedness in an antiquated mode of conduct as well as of speech.'¹⁵⁷ This links Stevens back to the protagonists discussed in the previous chapter – Etsuko, Ono, Ogata-San – in that Stevens too finds himself 'out of time', or more particularly out of step with the time in which he now lives. Farraday represents the new world order, a world so alien to Stevens that there seems little prospect of him surviving. At the end of the novel, Stevens is still attempting to come to terms with the challenge:

Perhaps it is indeed time I began to look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically. After all, when one thinks about it, it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in

¹⁵⁶ O'Brien, p.794.

¹⁵⁷ Lilian R. Furst, 'Memory's Fragile Power in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* and W.G. Sebald's "Max Ferber"', *Contemporary Literature* 48.4 (Winter 2007), p.542.

– particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth. [...] Perhaps, then, when I return to Darlington Hall tomorrow ... I will begin practising with new effort. I should hope, then, that by the time of my employer's return, I shall be in a position to pleasantly surprise him (p.245).

The idea that it is possible to practice bantering, and by oneself at that, is quintessential Stevens. As Pico Iyer argues, Stevens's ultimate failure to reconcile himself to the changing social and political environment arises out of his inability to speak 'the language of the world'¹⁵⁸. The suggestion that bantering is something that can be *practised*, rather than something which comes naturally, suggests that despite his positive note, Stevens is destined to remain subjugated by the lack of an authentic voice.

It is perhaps as a result of this lack that Stevens's narrative is anxiously over-familiar, peppered with phrases such as 'as you might expect' (p.4), 'you will no doubt ... understand' (p.29) and 'as you might imagine' (p.83). Such phrases invite us to consider the identity of Stevens's narratee. As Kathleen Wall observes:

There is no physical presence in the novel to account for the "you" he [Stevens] so frequently addresses. Stevens attributes knowledge to his narratee, however, that allows us to conclude something about the kind of listener he envisions: a younger, less experienced butler who knows something of the procedures and problems that Stevens has encountered, who can make some judgements about the quality and circumstances of Stevens's work, but who does not know as much as Stevens.¹⁵⁹

On the one hand, then, Stevens's listener might be likened to an apprentice butler, figuratively sitting at the feet of the 'master', partaking of his wisdom and contemplating the changing world which will affect him in an even greater way than it has Stevens. Such a listener would represent a suitably sympathetic ear for Stevens, for in the anxious, over-familiar tone there is a suggestion of defensiveness, as if Stevens is in fact only too aware that history shows neither his former master nor Stevens himself in the best of light.

¹⁵⁸ Cited O'Brien, 'Serving a New World Order', p.793.

¹⁵⁹ Wall, p.24.

The defensive nature of his narrative recalls another strategy of defence - that of mimicry, identified by Bhabha as a form of resistance to colonial hegemony in which the subaltern imitates the elite – whether intentionally or subconsciously – in word, in deed, in appearance, thus undermining that elite’s sense of identity and superiority. Allied to the practice of mimicry is the appropriation of the signs and symbols associated with hegemonic control. In his essay *Rebellious Hillmen: the Gudem-Rampa Risings, 1839-1924*, for example, David Arnold describes the Indian rebels’ targeting of police stations, where ‘to don the uniforms of the vanquished constables, was a spectacular inversion of the oppression [the] hillmen had so recently suffered...’¹⁶⁰ Stevens undertakes a similar process of mimicry and appropriation in *Remains*. As we have seen, in the village of Moscombe Stevens is mistaken by the locals for a gentleman. This misunderstanding arises from the fact that he drives Mr Farraday’s Ford motor car and wears a suit handed down to him by a gentleman visitor to Darlington House. The importance he places on selecting the correct clothing for his trip informs an understanding of just how important mimicry is in Stevens’s strategy:

Then there was the question of what sorts of costume were appropriate on such a journey ... I am in the possession of a number of splendid suits, kindly passed on to me over the years by Lord Darlington himself, and by various guests... [T]here is one lounge suit, passed on to me in 1931 or 1932 by Sir Edward Blair...which might well be appropriate for evenings in the lounge or dining room of any guest houses where I might lodge. (p.10)

It is telling that Stevens chooses to consider the appropriate ‘costume’ for his journey. He appropriates the symbols of the class he serves – the car, the fine clothing – as a means of mimicking that class. This mimicry comes to a head in the village of Moscombe where Stevens misleads most of the villagers into thinking that he has been directly involved in great affairs of state. And yet, if Stevens’s appropriation of

¹⁶⁰ David Arnold, ‘Rebellious Hillmen: the Gudem-Rampa Risings, 1839-1924’ in *Subaltern Studies I*, ed. by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.131.

such signs and symbols can be said to be deliberate, then his is a botched job. Stevens's deception falls apart under close scrutiny. The suit he wears is two decades out of fashion; the history he claims to have been a part of is discredited and distanced by the intervening years of war and reflection.

Central to Stevens's execution of the role of butler is the carefully modulated narrative voice which he employs. As John McLeod argues, '[h]is language betrays an anxiety to fix meaning securely. It attempts to be both meticulous and precise'¹⁶¹. We may, by way of example, cite Stevens's extraordinary reaction to his father's death, and his explanation of his actions to Miss Kenton: 'Miss Kenton, please don't think me *unduly improper* in *not ascending* to see my father *in his deceased condition* just at this moment. You see, I know my father would have wished me to carry on just now' (p.106 – my emphases). His speech has a rehearsed feel to it which denies any space for emotion or spontaneity. As Lewis observes:

[t]he butler mimics a language above his station to create the impression of being the 'gentleman's gentleman'. Yet...there is something absurd about Stevens's speech. He strives too hard to be formal and correct, especially in his vocabulary...¹⁶²

Thus his extraordinary circuitous language, exemplified by references to 'not ascending' and his father's 'deceased condition'. Even in a moment of personal tragedy, Stevens maintains the persona of the gentleman-butler, refusing to allow the linguistic mask to slip in order to reveal a more authentic and emotional voice.

This strategic use of voice, however, falls down when Stevens is removed from his 'natural' environment. The landlady in Salisbury may mistake him for a gentleman 'on account of Mr Farraday's Ford and the high quality of my suit' (p.26), and most

¹⁶¹ McLeod, p.151.

¹⁶² Lewis p.94.

of the villagers of Moscombe are similarly impressed but the voice does not hold up to similar scrutiny. Dr Carlisle, by far the most worldly-wise of the villagers, sees through Stevens's charade whilst the colonel's batman tellingly notes that Stevens 'talk[s] *almost* like a gentleman' (p.119 – my emphasis). The batman's words recall Bhabha's suggestion that 'mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite*.'¹⁶³ Stevens's mimicry is undermined by ambiguity, by the slippage caused by the fact that he talks 'almost' (but not quite) like a gentleman, by the fact that he almost belongs in Mr Farraday's Ford (but not quite, for he continually runs out of fuel or water), by the fact that he almost dresses like a gentleman (but not quite, because his suit is ill-fitting and two decades out of fashion).

We are left then to speculate as to the extent to which, for all his discourse on professional standards, Stevens is merely performing the role of butler. For O'Brien, 'one of the most significant ways in which Stevens serves the new order is simply through playing the role of the English butler to the hilt'¹⁶⁴. Indeed, Farraday raises this issue in a rare bad-tempered outburst:

'I mean to say, Stevens, this *is* a grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you? That's what I wanted, isn't that what I have?' (p.124)

As O'Brien claims, 'the commodification of Stevens as a "genuine old-fashioned English butler" may be compared with the commodification ...of Ishiguro as a genuine new-world "international" writer'¹⁶⁵. But it also hints at the wider commodification of labour in global economy, a point to which I will return when I examine the portrayal of the commodification of the sex industry in *Brownout on*

¹⁶³ Bhabha, *Location*, p.86 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶⁴ O'Brien, P.796.

¹⁶⁵ O'Brien, p.797.

Breadfruit Boulevard and *Renegade or Halo*² in Chapter Four. Meanwhile, the notion that Stevens can be bought as an ‘old-fashioned English butler’, as part of the ‘package’ that comes with the purchase of Darlington Hall, points to a final way in which the novel figures the socio-political landscape of the 1980s by foregrounding the dominant economic and political position of the United States of America.

Any notion of cosmopolitanism at the end of the twentieth century has to take into account the dominant position of the United States at that time. For Sim, ‘*Remains* registers the passing of imperial hegemony from Britain to the United States; it underscores the emergence of a differently configured but still oppressive neo-colonial formation’¹⁶⁶. Whilst my analysis in this section has concentrated on the emergence of this new geo-political force in the novel’s primary narrative, in the shape of Farraday’s ownership of Darlington Hall, the emergence of the United States is also figured in the secondary narrative in the shape of Senator Lewis’s intervention in the international conference held at Darlington Hall in the 1920s. His insistence on the increasing professionalization of global affairs foreshadows America’s position at the heart of global politics in the late twentieth century, so that the novel looks forward into the decades either side of the turn of the century just as much as it looks backwards. Meanwhile, we may read Stevens’s journey (and therefore the entire novel) as being predicated on a very contemporary professional challenge which arises out of new work patterns imported from, or imposed by, America. Bruce Robbins suggests that ‘[w]hat we now perceive as everyday harriedness, the perpetual time deficit and time anxiety associated with [modern life] results in large part from the so-called ‘restructuring’ of companies, the preference for part-time or “flexible”

¹⁶⁶ Sim, p.158.

labor and “just-in-time” production...’¹⁶⁷. Stevens experiences one such example of “restructuring” in the early part of the novel, the staff shortages and the insufficiencies of his redrawn staff roster providing him with the putative reason for his trek across country to Miss Kenton, and thus for the entire narrative which follows.

For all that its narrative style is apparently sedate, time runs out a great deal in *The Remains of the Day*. On a personal level, Stevens’s chances of finding happiness with Miss Kenton run out, in truth long before his ‘race’ across the south of England, whilst his commitment to the professional sees time run out on any opportunity to tend to his dying father and to mend broken fences there. His abnegation of personal duties stems from his professional commitment to Lord Darlington, who also finds time running out not only on his attempts to prevent war but also on his very way of life. Meanwhile, the novel’s climax, and its title itself, leaves the reader with the sense that time is running out on Stevens’s life itself. His rather weary conclusion that ‘[p]erhaps...I should cease looking back so much...and try to make the best of what remains of my day’ (p.244) suggests that, like Etsuko and Ono before him, there is little place for him in the ‘new’, cosmopolitan world.

When We Were Orphans

In my analysis to date I have suggested that each of Ishiguro’s first three novels – *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* – follow the same temporal structure, with a primary narrative whose main function is to allow the unreliable narrator to draw upon their memory of events which occurred two or three decades earlier. I have also suggested that many aspects of both the primary and secondary narratives in these novels appear to look forward in time to the

¹⁶⁷ Robbins, pp.428-429.

circumstances of the novels' composition. On the surface, *When We Were Orphans* appears to follow a similar structure, with a primary narrative which focuses upon the developing career of the narrator, the English detective Christopher Banks, and a secondary narrative in which Banks recalls his childhood in the International Settlement in Shanghai but which also says something of Shanghai's status as a global city at the end of the twentieth century. However, the structure of *Orphans* is, in fact, somewhat more complex than those of its predecessors. For one thing, the two narrative threads converge much more closely towards the end of the novel, as the primary narrative takes Banks back to Shanghai to investigate the mysterious disappearance of his parents, revealed in the course of the secondary narrative. Similarly, the manner in which the narrative is divided also complicates comparisons with earlier novels. *Orphans* comprises six main parts, dated between 1930 and 1937, with an additional Epilogue dated 1958, but Ishiguro manipulates the temporal structure by giving each section a date and location which only vaguely relates to the events narrated in that section. So it is that although the first three parts, along with the Epilogue, are marked 'London', and the remaining parts are marked 'Cathay Hotel, Shanghai', for much of the novel the narrative leaps back and forth between both locations and beyond the timescales indicated. Furthermore, Banks narrates each section at a point in time *before* the subsequent section begins meaning that, more so than previous Ishiguro narrators, he begins each section of his narrative unaware of how the events he is narrating will conclude.

Despite these complexities, and dismissing – for the time being – the novel's Epilogue, it is possible to read *Orphans* as a novel which divides neatly into two distinct halves. The majority of critics recognise this split as spatial, reading the first

three parts of *Orphans* as the ‘London’ section and the latter three parts as the ‘Shanghai’ section, whilst also acknowledging the concurrent structural shift from the surface realism which characterises the first half of the novel to a more surreal style in the second. My analysis will follow this general delineation but will suggest that the split is fundamentally temporal in nature. I will begin by analysing the first half of the novel, putatively set in London. I will examine the ways in which this section of the novel establishes the narrator’s identity as a detective whilst also noting the ways in which Ishiguro begins to subvert that genre, preparing the ground for the rather more substantial disintegration of Banks’s detective-identity in the second half of the novel. If one of the key concerns of this part of the novel is to establish and begin to subvert the detective genre then another, I will argue, is to establish Banks’s family background through the novel’s secondary narrative. Although the three parts of the novel considered here are tagged ‘London’, a large portion of the narrative is taken up by Banks’s analeptic excursions into his childhood in Shanghai. I shall examine the importance of these sections of the narrative, with particular attention paid to the narrator’s childhood friendship with his Japanese neighbour Akira and to the ways in which their relationship, and their childhood games, foreshadow the larger global concerns which emerge in the second half of the novel. In fact, these concerns begin to emerge during this first half of the novel, as questions of ethical intervention, cosmopolitan behaviour and historical agency rise to the surface of the narrative. Whilst identifying the increasing pace of the narrative as a result of the emergence of such factors, I shall suggest that the ‘London’ sections of the novel are infused with a strangely sedate sense of urgency which recalls Stevens’s road trip across England in *Remains*. By comparison, the second half of the novel is characterised by a distinct quickening of the pace. I will examine the extent to which Banks’s growing sense of

disorientation in Shanghai is a result of his loss of control over time, and in particular of a sense that time is rapidly running out. It is in this state of harriedness that Banks finds his detective-identity unravelling, just as the novel's manipulation of the detective genre progresses to full-blown subversion. That subversion, I will argue, serves the novel's critique of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, suggesting that whereas the first half of the novel was concerned primarily with the task of looking back into the narrator's past, the 'Shanghai' sections of *Orphans* switch the gaze firmly towards the future. Finally, I shall attend to the novel's Epilogue, an unusual feature for an Ishiguro novel. Often read as endowing Banks with a sense both of closure and of some kind of brighter future denied earlier Ishiguro narrators, I will suggest that certain clues within this final section of the novel suggest otherwise.

Parts 1 – 3: London

Ishiguro uses the first half of *When We Were Orphans* both to establish the novel's debt to the detective genre and also to begin to subvert that form. Although *Orphans* draws upon conventions from across the spectrum of crime sub-genres, Ishiguro's pastiche relates most closely to the Golden Age detective novel of the 1930s, a genre typified by a number of stock conventions such as a country house setting, a body discovered in a locked room or similar enclosed space, the arrival of a celebrated detective who is also an 'outsider', a number of possible suspects, and a final twist in the tale¹⁶⁸. Ishiguro has talked often of his reasons for drawing on this particular sub-genre of the detective novel:

...reading these novels over the distance of time, I found them very poignant, because they were actually written and read immediately after the Great War, by a generation trying to

¹⁶⁸ For a fuller account of the conventions of Golden Age detective fiction see Stephen Knight, 'The Golden Age' in *the Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, edited by Martin Priestmann, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.77-94.

recover from the trauma of that war. That was a generation that knew better than we do today what the real nature of evil and suffering was.¹⁶⁹

What is particularly interesting about Ishiguro's reasons for choosing this genre is the fact that the choice is informed by temporal concerns: the 'distance of time' over which he reviews these novels draws attention to the similar temporal gap between the events he narrates and the act of their writing; the poignancy hints at the sense of nostalgia evoked by these novels at the time of their production and which is also common to Ishiguro's novels; the reference to previous generations recalls the conflict between generations which has emerged as a theme in each of Ishiguro's previous novels; and mention of the Great War highlights both the looming presence of the subsequent Second World War and the geo-political factors which provide context both for the novel's actual historical setting and its subsequent interrogation of globalisation and cosmopolitanism at the turn of the century.

If the Golden Age detective novel thus suits Ishiguro's needs from a historical point of view, there is another, more political factor to consider. The very structure of the detective novel is predicated upon the protagonist solving the crime and thus restoring the societal balance which existed before the crime was perpetrated. Thus, as Sim notes, the genre 'fosters status quo conservatism'¹⁷⁰. As an act whose aims are to maintain or restore the existing socio-economic structure, Banks's agency as a detective is aligned with Lord Darlington's intervention onto the world stage in *Remains*. Banks, in attempting to rescue his parents (and thus restore the family unit nostalgically recalled in the secondary narrative) and in so doing to prevent the

¹⁶⁹ Alan Mudge, 'Ishiguro Takes a Literary Approach to the Detective Novel', *Bookpage Interview*, September 2000, <http://www.bookpage.com/0009bp/kazoo_ishiguro.html>, [accessed 15 September 2005].

¹⁷⁰ Sim, p.227.

outbreak of war in the East, seeks to resist the forces of change both on the historical front and on a personal level and to restore order and stability to his world.

In the first half of *Orphans*, Ishiguro establishes Banks's credentials as a classic Golden Age detective. His reputation grows steadily as he solves crimes such as "The Mannering Case", "The Roger Parker Case", and "The Studley Grange Business", during which he investigates a body found in a pond within a walled-garden where "one could not avoid the impression of having stepped into a roofless prison cell" (p.31) and where he spends several minutes "on my front, scrutinising with my magnifying glass one of the slabs that projected over the water" (p.31). It is, at this stage, staple Golden Age fare – the country houses, the bodies found in enclosed spaces, the murderer quickly identified (usually with the aid of the ubiquitous magnifying glass) and the comforting equilibrium quickly restored. However, as well as establishing the detective genre in the first half of the novel, Ishiguro begins to sow the seeds of its subversion. Indeed, upon closer inspection, Ishiguro's adherence to the detective genre appears somewhat superficial. Although Banks quickly gains renown as a brilliant detective, details of his successful cases are noticeably thin on the ground; so absent are these details that, as Kakutani argues, '[a]t times the reader even wonders if he is really a detective at all, so cursory are his descriptions of his work'¹⁷¹. Meanwhile, some of the murders which Banks investigates begin to take on a somewhat macabre quality out of keeping with the more genteel and sanitised crimes typical of the Golden-Age format. In a case which Banks describes only as taking place in 'the village of Coring, in Somerset' (p.134), the bodies of several

¹⁷¹ Michiko Kakutani, 'The Case He Can't Solve: A Detective's Delusions', *The New York Times*, 19 September 2000
 <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E04E3DF173BF93AA2575AC0A9669C8B63>>
 [accessed 1 May 2006].

children are discovered in a country lane. Although never made explicit, there is a suggestion that the case involves something more than mere murder, something ghastly and horrific which in some way foreshadows the apocalyptic scenes that Banks will find himself in the midst of in Shanghai.

The 'Coring' scene, and in particular the dialogue Banks enters into with the local inspector, plays a small but pivotal role in the novel. The inspector's vague references to being 'sickened' (p.134) at reaching a 'conclusion I'm somewhat loath to reach' (p.134) regarding the horror he 'can't comprehend' (p.135) add to the sense of ambiguity regarding the exact nature of the crime. The scene comes to a head during one particularly impassioned outburst from the inspector:

I'm just a small person, sir. So I'll stay here and do what I can. I'll stay here and do my best to fight the serpent. But it's a beast with many heads. You cut one head off, three more will grow in its place. That's how it seems to me, sir. It's getting worse. It's getting worse every day. What's happened here, these poor little children...' He turned around and I could now see fury in his face. 'I'm just a small man. If I was a greater man' - and here, without a doubt, he looked accusingly straight into my eyes - 'if I was a greater man, then I tell you, sir, I'd hesitate no longer. I'd go to its heart.' (pp.135-6)

The inspector's reference to 'what's happened here' and his vague, metaphorical description of the criminal forces behind it, add to the elusive nature of the narrative. Sim argues that '[t]his unsettling elusiveness operates as a textual gap inviting writerly participation'¹⁷². The elision in the text may well indeed invite writerly participation but it also, I would suggest, invites the intervention of the reader. And whilst Sim argues persuasively that as a result of such elision the novel 'encourages us to append an allegorical or parabolic reading'¹⁷³ which he relates the novel's dragon/serpent imagery, I would like to argue for a more contemporary reading. Living with the notion of a terrible but unspecified threat has become one of the exigencies of the contemporary, post-9/11 world, as has the sense that 'something'

¹⁷² Sim, p.210.

¹⁷³ Sim, p.210.

must be done but that such agency lies outwith the average citizen's grasp. As such, the West Country case seems to stand for a much larger state of being, one which lies in the future of the narrative rather than in the past.

The lack of detail regarding the cases which he solves raises, as we have already seen, questions over just how convincing a detective Banks actually makes. As was the case with Stevens in the role of traveller and in his position as butler under the American, Farraday, there is somewhat of a sense that Banks mimics the role of detective. As it transpires, Banks is much given to mimicry. In an early scene in the novel, he recounts his first day at boarding school in England:

I recall observing a mannerism many of the boys adopted when standing and talking-of tucking the right hand into a waistcoat pocket and moving the left shoulder up and down in a kind of shrug to underline certain of their remarks. I distinctly remember reproducing these mannerisms on that same first day with sufficient expertise that not a single of my fellows noticed anything odd or thought to make fun. (p.7)

Nor is such a talent for imitation restricted to his childhood. A little later in the novel Banks describes how he 'arrived at the Chillingworth Club...and followed Osbourne's example of cheerily greeting the grandly uniformed doorman' (p.12). When these incidents are allied to accounts of the childhood detective games shared with his Japanese neighbour Akira, games which involve impersonating the celebrated Shanghai detective Inspector Kung as he investigates the disappearance of Banks' father, what begins to emerge is a picture of a fantasist convinced he can blend into any environment if only he can accurately mimic its conventions. As such, mimicry emerges as a potential defence mechanism for Banks, a means of fitting in, of belonging, of imparting a degree of agency upon the world.

Read in this way, there emerges a very different character from that which appears on the surface. We might, for example, be drawn to Banks's recollection of his

‘companions’ (cf. p.6) at boarding school, a curiously colourless description, devoid of any of the chummy companionship we might expect from such friendships. There emerges the picture of a lonely child, an orphan indeed, who carries these emotional scars into an equally cold adulthood. Despite repeated denials from Banks himself, no end of family members, acquaintances and former schoolmates queue up to undermine his character, and his version of events. Near the beginning of the novel, for example, a former classmate describes Banks as having been ‘such an odd bird at school’ (p.5), whilst later, in Shanghai, his path crosses with that of another of his schoolmates who ruefully reflects ‘You know, we should have teamed up. The two miserable loners.’ (p.183) Such charges are strenuously denied by Banks, yet his delusion is clear and the impression hardens of a solitary and insecure character at odds with the picture of the successful detective and social climber that he would have us believe.

A large part of the detective mask which Banks assumes is formed from the speech patterns of the detective which he adopts. Just as Stevens practiced the art of bantering, so in *Orphans* does Banks engage in what we might term ‘detective-speak’. In an early scene in the novel, for example, Banks recounts a chance meeting with an acquaintance from the past:

“[I]t is perhaps worth mentioning...my unexpected reunion with Colonel Chamberlain after all these years. [...] I was standing in a bookshop in Charing Cross Road one rainy afternoon, examining an illustrated edition of *Ivanhoe*. I had been aware for some time of someone hovering close behind me...” (p.22)

This passage is significant as it introduces an important analeptic detail; Colonel Chamberlain, we learn, was the official entrusted with the task of escorting the young Banks ‘home’ to England after the disappearance of his parents in Shanghai. In terms of narrative voice, however, the passage firmly establishes the narrator’s credentials

as a detective; Banks ‘examines’ the book rather than browsing it, whilst his sharp instincts make him aware of the presence of another party without having to turn and look. As such, the passage does much to construct Banks’s identity as that of ‘detective’; he employs the appropriate tone and vocabulary, he possesses the requisite skills.

I mentioned, some moments ago, Banks’s childhood detective games with his childhood friend Akira as early examples of his expertise in the art of mimicry. The recollection of these childhood games form part of a much broader analeptic project undertaken by Banks in the first half of the novel in which he fills in details of his childhood and family life in Shanghai. Christopher’s friendship with Akira is central to much of what happens later in the novel, so that the analeptic detail provided in this earlier section becomes crucial. Banks describes, for example, playing with Akira shortly after the disappearance of his father:

We went to the back of his garden ... and soon became immersed in one of our dramatic narratives...[A]fter an hour or so, my friend suddenly stopped and looked oddly at me. Then he said:
 ‘If you like, we play new game.’
 ‘A new game?’
 [...]
 ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘If you like, we play detective. We search for father. We rescue father.’
 (pp.106-7)

The passage is interesting on a number of levels. The fact that he cannot recall exactly what game they were playing hints gently at Banks’s unreliability as a narrator. There is also a certain ambiguity in Akira’s ‘We search for father. We rescue father.’ Does his failure to specify ‘your father’ reflect merely a Japanese child’s struggle with the complexities of the English tongue, or does it suggest that they share the same father, that Akira is Banks, that Banks is Akira? Perhaps the most significant aspect of the passage, however, is that it goes on to show the genesis of Christopher and Akira’s

childhood detective games, based on the search for his missing father, games which foreshadow Banks later mission when he returns to Shanghai as an adult.

There is, however, a further significance to Banks's friendship with Akira. In one prominent episode, the two enter the room of Ling Tien, a servant in Akira's household, intent on discovering the potion which they believe Ling Tien has concocted which 'could turn severed hands into spiders' (p.91). The childish fantasy aside, the scene is a moving one. National rivalry (the boys' games are often predicated on an attempt to prove that their nationality is stronger/braver/better) gives way to mutual cooperation:

[m]y friend seemed to find some extra resolve, and holding out his arm to me, said: 'Come on, old chap We go together!'
We linked arms and took the final few steps like that. (p.95)

Whilst the scene is important both in illustrating the friendship between Banks and Akira and in foreshadowing a scene from the latter part of the novel, Sim reads a larger political message in the two boys' act, suggesting that just as the frequent attempts to prove their own country superior to the other's represents 'Great Power rivalry operating in the international arena'¹⁷⁴, so the boys entering the room arm in arm stands as 'a homology of Great Power collaboration'¹⁷⁵. As such, the childhood adventures of Banks and Akira which are recounted in the first half of *Orphans* foreshadow the larger questions of conflict, intervention, and transnational cooperation which inform the second half of the novel.

The other key detail which Banks recalls during his analeptic narrative in the first half of the novel is the familial tension which arises as a result of his father's professional

¹⁷⁴ Sim, p.217.

¹⁷⁵ Sim, p.206.

status. Banks's father is in the employ of Morganbrook and Byatt, a British trading company with a lucrative sideline in opium. His mother, meanwhile, campaigns loudly against this immoral traffic, pitching herself against both her husband and his employers. There runs throughout Banks's later investigation an unspoken understanding that the disappearance of his parents is in some way connected to this opium trade. But when later, as an adult, Banks researches the anti-opium movement, he is to be disappointed:

[M]y main motive was the hope that I would come across reports of my mother. After all ...I had been given to believe as a child that she was a key figure in the anti-opium campaigns. It was something of a disappointment then that I did not once find her name. (p.63)

The discrepancy between Banks's perception of his mother's role in the abolition of the opium trade and the apparently more prosaic reality recalls Ono, the narrator and chief protagonist in *An Artist of the Floating World*. A similarly exaggerated sense of historical agency to that which Ono possessed seems to be at the heart of Banks's understanding of his mother's role in defeating the opium traders. What does emerge, however, is the familial tension caused by the intrusion of the workplace into the domestic sphere. As Bain observes, 'Mr Banks works for corporate and national interests that are suspect yet inescapable; Mrs Banks fights for "values" like social justice and corporate transparency'¹⁷⁶. As was the case with *Remains* then, the novel foregrounds the problems inherent in balancing professional demands with family commitments and ethical imperatives. But it also raises far larger questions regarding the ethics of globalisation. As Bain observes, Morganbrook and Byatt 'plays a key role in the structure of dependency that binds the vast underclass of a rickety Chinese state to Europe's commercial and strategic interests in Asia'¹⁷⁷. As such, Banks's memories of his childhood also draw out the darker side of the global economy, the

¹⁷⁶ Bain, p.246.

¹⁷⁷ Bain, p.246.

international trade and traffic in drugs, and foreground the larger cosmopolitan concerns which will drive the second half of the novel.

In fact, these cosmopolitan concerns emerge throughout the first half of *Orphans*. Towards the beginning of the novel, Banks attends a dinner held by the Royal Geographical Society, during which the distinguished guest speaker, H.L. Mortimer, uses his lecture on the threat of Nazism to argue that ‘universal suffrage had severely weakened Britain’s hand in international affairs’ (p.136). Both the sentiment itself, and the background of a growing Nazi threat, draw uncomfortable parallels with an episode in *The Remains of the Day* where a guest of Lord Darlington quizzes Stevens on a number of political matters in order to prove that such matters are better left in the hands of the elite. Similarly, at an earlier event, Sir Cecil Medhurst insists that the creation of the League of Nations ‘ensure[s] that we would never again see on this globe a calamity on the scale of the Great War’ (p.42), a sentiment which recalls the similarly well-intentioned but misguided interference upon world affairs perpetrated by the ‘gentleman amateurs’ in *Remains*. The ‘never again’ imperative foreshadows, of course, the language frequently employed by Winston Churchill during the Second World War, and marks the ironic distance between the time of narration and the time of the reader. In private conversation with Banks, however, Sir Cecil offers a rather different world view:

We’ll do what we can. Organise, confer. Get the greatest men from the greatest nations to put their heads together and talk. But there’ll always be evil lurking around the corner for us. [...] That’s why we’ll need to rely ever more on the likes of you, my young friend. (pp.43-44)

The pessimistic tenor of Sir Cecil’s private assessment, which contrasts sharply with his public views, hints at an awareness of the future limitations of transnational

intervention in international crises. Indeed, Bain argues that it is possible to read Medhurst as ‘a global actor haunted by a private vision of the future’¹⁷⁸:

Sir Cecil’s misgivings foreshadow a history neither he nor anyone else in the book can possibly know....A sort of future spectre of the international community’s premise stands behind Sir Cecil’s assertion that “mankind has learned from its mistakes”.¹⁷⁹

Medhurst’s speech, then, is haunted by future crises which will disprove the ‘never again’ philosophy just as, on a larger scale, Banks’s narrative reaches forward from its own historical moment to interrogate the contemporary cosmopolitan moment of its reader.

Sir Cecil’s suggestion that society would come to rely increasingly more on the likes of Banks recalls, of course, the words of the inspector Banks encounters in the ‘Coring’ case. Their reliance on others to intervene suggests something of the difficulty the ordinary citizen has in seeing beyond the local and perceiving of themselves as global actors. For Sim, ‘the inspector’s injunction to Banks to leave the suggestively worded “West Country” to pursue the serpent’s head might be termed an allegorical dramatisation of such phenomenological limitations as they impinge on cultural production and reception’¹⁸⁰. Similarly, the London society to which Banks belongs has a broad international outlook and wants something done. What that something might be, however, is unclear: ‘while everyone in England wants intervention in something [...] no one, least of all the detective, can explain the motives or rationales which govern the desire or should frame the intervention’¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁸ Bain, p.248.

¹⁷⁹ Bain, p.248.

¹⁸⁰ Sim, p.216.

¹⁸¹ Bain, p.250.

The first half of *Orphans*, then, is characterised by a strange ambiguity whereby there is a growing sense that some kind of positive action is required, both on the world stage and in Banks's private search for his missing parents, but that action is ill-defined and constantly postponed. The pace of the narrative at this point is one of sedate urgency which recalls Stevens's leisurely paced road trip across the south of England in *Remains*. This sense of deferred agency is exemplified in the fact that Banks appears to develop the unfortunate habit of arriving at the crime scene rather late in the day. Of the disturbing case of the murdered children which I have already mentioned, for example, Banks explains:

I did not arrive in the village until four days after the bodies of the children had been discovered in the lane, and the constant rainfall had turned the ditch where they had been found into a muddy stream – making the gathering of relevant evidence no simple affair. (p.134)

This sense of dilatoriness is a feature which I would suggest is common to each of the novels considered in this thesis. In *Orphans*, however, it gives way in the second half of the novel to a considerably more accelerated pace.

Parts 4-6: Shanghai

If much of the first three parts of *Orphans* are characterised by a kind of dilatoriness on the part of its protagonists then the pace quickens noticeably as the focus swings from London to Shanghai in the second half of the novel. Whilst I will suggest shortly that there remains a trace of what I have termed the sedate urgency from the first half of the novel, this second half of *Orphans* is largely characterised by an acceleration of time in keeping with the demands of the crime genre. In particular Banks, in this part of the novel, experiences a sense of alienation and disorientation which arises from the fact that he begins to lose control over time as the somewhat nebulous deadline he has identified approaches. Perhaps as a result of this loss of control, the second half of *Orphans* also sees the unravelling of the detective novel as Ishiguro's treatment of the

genre descends from pastiche into outright subversion, revealing in the process the novel's critique of globalisation and cosmopolitanism at the beginning of the twenty first century.

Banks begins the Shanghai section of the novel by commenting upon an unfortunate habit he has observed in the locals which has quickly become 'a perennial source of irritation' (p.153), namely 'the way people here seem determined at every opportunity to block one's view' (p.153). The habit contributes to the larger sense of blockage and alienation which comes to characterise Banks's narrative as this section of the novel progresses. That sense of alienation and frustration arises, I would argue, from the fact that Banks finds it increasingly difficult to keep control of time. For all his proclamations that he works best as a free and independent agent (or, less charitably, as a 'loner'), it is clear that in Shanghai there are limitations placed upon his ability to do that as he becomes increasingly reliant on the assistance – and on the time – of others. To his growing frustration, he frequently finds himself kept waiting – by Grayson from the Municipal Council (p.177) for example, or by the Chinese Lieutenant who will not allow Banks out into the war-torn Chapei district to seek out the house where he believes his parents remain captive (pp. 231-233). Perhaps as a result, Banks loses a sense of control, so that he proclaims himself 'peculiarly detached from my activities' (p.215). Banks's experience – the alienation, the reliance on others, the loss of control over time, the sense of delay in the face of urgency or 'busy-ness' – all points towards the fact that he has not merely experienced a geographical shift from London to Shanghai but also a temporal shift which seems him increasingly frustrated and unable to control his own time.

A large part of the increasing time-pressure which Banks appears to experience comes from the sense that he is working towards a deadline which accelerates towards him as the novel progresses. In this, *Orphans* conforms to a convention often found in the detective novel and, more often still, in the thriller (an important sub-genre of the crime novel). Early in his time in Shanghai, for example, the Consular representative McDonald offers Banks the assistance of some local detectives to ‘save you, all of us, some valuable time’ (p.155) since he ‘rather fear[s] we don’t have a great deal of time left’ (p.156). Similarly, Sarah Hemmings, whose relationship with Banks recalls that between Stevens and Miss Kenton, proposes leaving her husband and fleeing with Banks ‘before it’s too late’ (p.213). In keeping with the elusive nature of the narrative, neither MacDonald nor Sarah Hemmings make clear what exactly these deadlines refer to, nor the consequences of failing to meet them. In fact, Banks fails to meet either. Having agreed to make good his escape with Sarah, he runs out of time to make their rendezvous after going off in pursuit of his parents. That pursuit itself becomes a race against time to reach them before the house they are being held in is destroyed by the advancing Japanese army. In a schizophrenic twist, Banks comes to equate recovering his parents with averting the military crisis which is unfolding before him. For Bain, this is one of the ways in which the novel examines the ethics of intervention and historical agency: ‘The premise on which Christopher operates: time is running out and the parameters of a specific mission – rescuing his parents – can emerge from the muddle of a duty to “civilization”.’¹⁸² Thus, having witnessed a Japanese rocket attack on the Chinese from the relative safety of the hotel in the International Settlement, he is able to assure the gathered revellers, to their evident relief, that ‘I would not be here now if I were not optimistic about my chances of

¹⁸² Bain, p.251.

bringing this case, in the very near future, to a happy conclusion' (p.161). Similarly, when debating Sarah's proposal for escape and abandonment, he finds himself weighed down by his duty to others:

'The difficulty is my work here. I'll have to finish here first. After all, the whole world's on the brink of catastrophe. What would people think of me if I abandoned them all at this stage?' (p.212)

Banks's notion that in saving his parents he also saves the world separates him from previous Ishiguro narrators. Whereas Stevens and Ono before him abnegate their familial responsibilities in favour of the professional, Banks conflates the two. For him, the increased pressure on time, the looming deadline, blurs the lines between family time and work time. The increasingly harried experience of modern life represented by the Shanghai section of the novel leads Banks to a sense of alienation and detachment which reflects something of the modern experience at the turn of the century and invites once again a contemporary, or cosmopolitan, reading of the work.

It is worth noting, however, that even in the accelerated time of modern Shanghai there remain moments of what I have elsewhere termed sedate urgency. The most obvious of these is the very fact that Banks arrives in Shanghai intent on finding his parents several decades after their disappearance. Even for a detective who extols the virtues of arriving late on the scene the trail is likely to have gone rather cold in the intervening years. Similarly, for all his apparent busyness upon arriving in Shanghai, not terribly much happens very quickly. The three Shanghai sections are labelled '20th September 1937', '29th September 1937' and '20th October 1937' respectively. Only in the final few chapters of the novel does the pace truly quicken as Banks closes in on his 'objective'. That is, despite the fact that the preparatory work for his investigation in Shanghai has taken place over many years in England, he spends a whole month in Shanghai doing very little other than 'being taken from function to

function by various hosts' (p.182). A closer examination of Part Four of the novel (20th September 1937) will illustrate the point. In the nine days between this and the next section, Banks settles in to his comfortable hotel, attends the cabaret at the Palace Hotel Ballroom, scans the streets in search of his childhood friend Akira and rescues a drunken Sir Cecil from an illegal backstreet gambling den. All worthwhile ways to spend one's time perhaps, but not quite in keeping with the urgency of finding his parents and preventing the outbreak of war.

Banks does also spend some of his early days in Shanghai following leads as to his parents' disappearance, but in general in the second half of the novel his detective identity, and the detective genre in general, begins to fall apart as Banks – like Stevens in his road trip across England - finds himself far removed from his normal social habitat. Ishiguro has explained in interviews the subversive potential he identified in removing his detective from the comfort of the Home Counties:

‘What I began with was the notion of taking one of these Golden Age detectives and setting him down, completely out of his depth, in the turmoil of the twentieth century, as the world hurtles from one horror to the next. I had this rather comic idea of a detective...examining dismembered corpses in a war-zone, with [his] magnifying glass, desperately wondering ‘who-dunnit’.’¹⁸³

This subverted image of the detective does indeed find its way into the later pages of the novel. Having stumbled across a badly wounded Japanese soldier, whom Banks convinces himself to be his childhood companion, Akira, he tells us:

I brought us to a halt and sat him on the remnants of a wall. Then, carefully removing the ragged jacket of his uniform, I examined his wounds again, using the torch and my magnifying glass. I was still unable to ascertain a great deal. (p.254)

The same image is reinforced a few pages later:

¹⁸³ Author Unknown, ‘Author Q&A: A Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro about his new novel “When We Were Orphans”’, *VintageCatalog*, October 2001, <<http://www.randomhouse.com/vintage/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375724404&view=qa>> [accessed 28 April 2006].

He was lying beside me quite still, and his colour was very pale, but I saw with relief that he was breathing evenly. I found my magnifying glass and began to gently examine his wound. (p.261)

These passages serve to illustrate just how ill-equipped Banks is for the world into which he has wandered, how far out of his genre he has stepped. The magnifying glass, usually a symbol of his status and his ability to impose a degree of agency upon the world, stands now as a symbol of impotence, as he finds himself unable, in his own words, to ascertain a great deal from the larger historical forces in operation all around him.

The detective's narrative voice also becomes increasingly fractured as the novel relocates to Shanghai. Outside its proper social and historical milieu, Banks's vocabulary and tone prove insufficient and inappropriate for the scenes he attempts to describe. For example, the horrific scene which confronts Banks and the Japanese soldier as they near the end of their odyssey through the war-torn streets of Shanghai is described in the following terms:

[C]losest to where we were standing...lay a boy slightly older than the girl we had followed in. One of his legs had been blown off at the hip, from where surprisingly long entrails, like the decorative tails of kites, had unfurled over the matting. (p.271)

The clipped, dethatched speech patterns of the detective genre are parodied, exposed as entirely inadequate to properly describe the world in which Banks finds himself stranded. Alan Webley identifies in all of Ishiguro's narrators an 'interpretive consonance', that is 'the tendency to interpret events in a way that is consonant with an already established set of values'¹⁸⁴. But that breaks down as Banks confronts the realities before him. The inadequacies of his professional voice stand – just like the

¹⁸⁴ Webley, 2006.

magnifying glass – as testament to Banks’s ever-increasing powerlessness to act upon the larger forces before him.

As Banks’s voice becomes increasingly ineffective, so it simultaneously becomes evermore ambiguous. On the one hand, he represents the arrogant voice of Empire. He harasses the Chinese lieutenant to allocate him several men, despite the fact that the Chinese are at that very moment making their last stand against the Japanese, even finding time to comment that ‘it was pretty sloppy work on the part of your men to have allowed these Japanese in behind your line. If all your people had been doing their jobs properly, I’m sure such a thing would never have arisen’ (p.244). And yet, out of the fog of war comes clarity of sorts. As Banks grows ever more deluded regarding his task in Shanghai, so conversely does the cause of the coming crisis become clearer. The distant complacency of the Europeans, who watch on as the Japanese attack the Chinese, endows Banks with a rare moment of lucidity:

I felt...a wave of revulsion towards [the Europeans]...What has quietly shocked me...is the refusal of everyone here to acknowledge their drastic culpability. [...] Here...at the heart of the maelstrom threatening to suck in the whole of the civilised world, is a pathetic conspiracy of denial; a denial of responsibility which has turned on itself and gone sour, manifesting itself in a sort of pompous defensiveness I have encountered so often.” (p.162)

Banks’s experience of the ‘real world’ in Shanghai results in a clash between his own personal beliefs and the ideology of Empire. His principles of good triumphing over evil, upon which his sense of vocation is founded, clashes with the murky realities of imperialism (and more broadly of globalisation) whose ideology he has previously reconciled with his own moral sensibilities.

Such a reading would seem to suggest that *Orphans* be considered a post-colonial text, its condemnation of the opium trade and the political machinations behind it exposing the corruption and moral vacuum at the heart of Western imperialism. Such

readings are complicated, although not entirely rebuffed, by the fact that Shanghai was never part of the British, or any other Empire, but rather one of the ports opened to international traders as a result of the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing. As such, the international community had no territorial claim to, but also no duty of responsibility towards, the city. The status of Shanghai as an international city of trade, rather than a colonial possession, points towards an alternative reading, as suggested by Sim: ‘That the climax of *Orphans* is set amid the start of the 1937 Japanese invasion means that modern imperial aggression is implicated rather than European expansionism per se’¹⁸⁵. Thus, whilst ‘the stress on tainted colonial earnings exposes...the socio-political system – monopoly capitalism – which generates these earnings’¹⁸⁶ the novel is primarily concerned with the global capitalism which will emerge out of the impending crisis rather than the earnings from Western imperialism which are about to be consigned to the past.

Rather than taking an interest purely in historical imperial misadventure, then, *Orphans* concerns itself with contemporary global networks of power. That is, it serves to critique the globalisation and cosmopolitanism that is prevalent at the time of the novel’s publication at the start of the twenty first century. One of the keys to this critique is the portrayal of the International Settlement, an enclave in the heart of Shanghai, and its relationship to the other world which surrounds it. This comparison is foregrounded in the games Banks and Akira play in their childhood, many of which feature the fearless pair figuratively leaving the safety of the Settlement to investigate the Chinese districts which, in real life, they are ‘absolutely forbidden to enter’ (p.54) for fear of the ‘ghastly diseases, filth and evil men’ (p.54) who lurk there. This rabid

¹⁸⁵ Sim, p.205.

¹⁸⁶ Sim, p.205.

‘othering’ perhaps explains Banks’s hysterical reaction to being driven, on his return to Shanghai as an adult, away from the safety of the enclave:

‘Good God! We’re actually outside the Settlement? *In Chapei*? Look here, you’re a fool, you know that? A fool!...Now we’re lost. We’re possibly dangerously close to the war zone. *And we’ve left the Settlement!*’ (pp.226-227, original emphases)

Even as an adult - decades after his childhood games in the garden of his secure home tucked safely away inside the International Settlement – Banks is alarmed and appalled at the thought of leaving the protective bubble and being confronted with the ‘evil’ other his parents cautioned him to avoid. But as Bain suggests, the fact that he finds he cannot avoid confronting that ‘other’ points to a larger significance:

His hysterical realization that [the International Settlement and the Chapei district] form an unavoidable totality illuminates the interlocking of categories that his 1930s and our new century confront with equal unease: privilege and underdevelopment across the global economy; rescue and war at its margins; the perpetuation of one’s own security and the compulsion to investigate crimes that disturb one’s own interests and feelings alike...¹⁸⁷

Read in this manner, Banks’s experience in Shanghai, and especially outside of the familiar environs of the International Settlement, is representative of a wider experience familiar to the twenty first century global citizen:

Shanghai’s “orphanhood” is constitutive of [a] problem of global perception: the moment at which the labouring populations of global capital become undeniably visible to the so-called international community is also the moment when that community confronts its own most overt and pressing peril. Shanghai, in *When We Were Orphans*, occupies the 1930s and the 1990s simultaneously; it is a place where labor, human rights, and the moral language of humanitarian intervention collide in the consciousness of the Western citizen.¹⁸⁸

Orphanhood in *When We Were Orphans* comes to stand not just for the familial status of many of its characters – Banks (who will, by the novel’s dénouement, turn out not to be an orphan after all), Sarah Hemmings, Jenny (whom Banks adopts shortly before his departure for Shanghai) – but also for a state of being familiar to the cosmopolitan citizen no longer bound to the quasi-family of nationhood, no longer connected directly to the product of his or her labour, instead vaguely cosmopolitan, transnational, a rootless, migrant citizen of the world.

¹⁸⁷ Bain, p.242.

¹⁸⁸ Bain, p.245.

To what extent might Banks be considered one such cosmopolitan citizen? In one of his memories of his Shanghai childhood he recalls a conversation with Uncle Philip, a close family friend, in which the young Christopher's expresses his fear that he is not 'English' enough. Philip's reply offers an early suggestion of a transnational dimension to Banks's identity:

'Well, it's true, out here, you've grown up with a lot of different sorts around you. Chinese, French, Germans, Americans, what have you. It'd be no wonder if you grew up a bit of a mongrel...I think it would be no bad thing if boys like you *all* grew up with a bit of everything. We might all treat each other a good deal better then. Be less of these wars for one thing...Perhaps one day, all these conflicts will end, and it won't be because of great statesmen or churches or organisations...It'll be because people have changed. They'll be like you...More a mixture'. (p.76)

On the face of it, Uncle Philip's assessment seems to endow Banks's lack of firm national identity with a heroic quality, suggesting that Banks's childhood prepares him advantageously for the increasingly cosmopolitan world in which he will grow up. As such, the International Settlement represents the cosmopolitan world in miniature. But like any utopia, the settlement has its excesses, its outsiders. And it is that outside world that Banks struggles to come to terms with. Outwith the International Settlement, he finds that rather than belonging everywhere, he belongs nowhere. Neither the England of his adult years nor the Shanghai he returns to are 'home'. Only the memories of his childhood inside the protective bubble of the International Settlement seem to provide any kind of refuge, a point he ruefully acknowledges towards the end of his increasingly surreal odyssey through the war-torn Chapei district when he admits of his childhood '[i]n many ways, it's where I've continued to live all my life' (p.277).

The novel's denouement further undermines Banks's status as a model cosmopolitan citizen. In a twist which recalls a similar moment in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Banks learns that his mother was indeed kidnapped (his father, rather

more prosaically it transpires, eloped with a mistress and died in exile two years later) after insulting the Chinese gangster and opium dealer Wang Ku. The price for her life, or rather for her subservience and subsequent years of human bondage, is that Wang Ku becomes secret benefactor to the young Banks, funding his privileged way through boarding school, Cambridge, and early adult life in distant England. In a further twist, the details of this deal are revealed to Banks by its broker, Uncle Philip, now a communist informer. Thus loyalty and betrayal, professional interests and familial sacrifice, and the invisible hand of transnational capital all play a part in the novel's dénouement. *Orphans* ends with Banks realising that he 'is the product of *two* international settlements: that between China and Europe, represented by the spaces and feelings of his childhood; and that between his mother and Wang Ku, which represents indenture, security, and a fairly extreme proposition about the lengths to which humanitarian obligations could go'¹⁸⁹. But it also ends revealing something of the dark side of the global economy – the trade in drugs, in people, the potentially dark machinations of international finance, and the generally wretched lot of the unseen majority who work day in day out to keep that global machine grinding forward.

Epilogue

The dramatic, genre-pleasing climax to *Orphans* is not quite the end of the story. In an unusual move for Ishiguro, the novel includes an Epilogue with the dateline 'London, 14th November 1958' but which in part finds Banks tracking his mother down to a nursing home in Hong Kong. Despite her advanced dementia, Banks appears to find in his meeting with his mother a kind of solace, a realisation that 'she'd never ceased to love me' (p.305), so that for many the Epilogue serves to

¹⁸⁹ Bain, p.256.

confer upon Banks ‘a more rejuvenating fate’¹⁹⁰ than that afforded previous Ishiguro narrators. In part that more promising future arises out of his ‘degree of solace’¹⁹¹ in his relationship with his adopted daughter, Jenny. On closer inspection, however, I would suggest that there is little to support this sense of optimism. Indeed, I would argue that if the Epilogue serves to demonstrate anything then it is the fact that in the two decades since we last met Banks, nothing very much has changed. The search for his mother – so allegedly close to fruition back in 1937 – has clearly meandered along, and there seems to have been no diminution in his talent for procrastination and delay: Jenny, he reveals, first proposed accompanying him on his trip to Hong Kong ‘only five years ago’ (p.299 – my emphasis). There is therefore a note of self-realisation and recrimination as he acknowledges to his uncomprehending mother that he is ‘really very sorry it’s taken so long’ (p.305) to track her down. Nor is the ‘solace’ to be found in his relationship with his adopted daughter necessarily all it seems. Strikingly, she repeatedly calls him ‘Uncle Christopher’ rather than father, suggesting an emotional distance between the pair which may relate back to his abandonment of Jenny to go in search of his parents in Shanghai. Meanwhile, back in England, Banks feels compelled to apologise to Jenny (just as he did to his mother) for ‘not [being] up here much recently’ (p.307). Behind the apology is the suggestion that Jenny requires support after an unspecified incident – referred to only as ‘all of that last year’ (p.307) – which has left her traumatised, and which recalls the upsetting but vaguely described crimes which Banks spends much of the first half of the novel solving. In fact, the unspecified incident appears to have been a suicide attempt and the ‘up here’ the rural English countryside, both of which recall Etsuko’s ghostly narrative in *A Pale View of Hills*. For Jenny, at least, ‘there is still time’ (p.307 –

¹⁹⁰ Sim, p.204.

¹⁹¹ Sim, p.204.

original emphasis). Less so for Banks. Of London he proclaims '[t]his city...has come to be my home' (p.313), suggesting that he has indeed finally found somewhere he belongs. However, his claim that he would be happy 'to live out the rest of my days here' (p.313) sounds alarmingly similar to Stevens's reference to 'what remains of my day' (*Remains*, p.244) and comes, in any case, with the acknowledgement that sometimes 'a sort of emptiness fills my hours' (p.313), an admission which records not only Banks's ennui but recalls also that sedate urgency which I have suggested characterises much of his narrative. The unavoidable sense is that his best days are behind him. Long after solving the mysterious case of the disappearing parents, time - it seems - is still running out for Christopher Banks.

Conclusion

In *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro artfully manipulates the travel and detective genres respectively. As Brian Finney argues, 'any examination of narrative manipulation in [Ishiguro's] work cannot be separated from a recognition of its political and national dimensions'¹⁹². We are thus left to ask what these political and national dimensions might be. In my analysis of the two novels, I have suggested that each is characterised by a sense of time running out. But what is it that is actually at stake? Certainly both mark the passing of a certain type of England, a country house England of class divisions and of a strong sense of subjectivity forged on the back of Empire. But both also are concerned with the Britain of the late twentieth century in which the novels were written. In some sense, then, they mark the passing of Britain as a global power and trace that passing back to the end of the Second World War, the break-up of the Empire which followed, and the rise of the

¹⁹² Brian H. Finnney, 'Figuring the Real: Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*', *California State University*, 2001 <<http://www.csulb.edu/~bhfinney/ishiguro.html>> [accessed 26 April, 2006].

United States as a dominant hegemonic power. As such, the two novels also look forward to the emerging cosmopolitan world, a world in which Britain's role – and notions of British identity – are likely to be much changed. More widely however, they consider the cosmopolitan position at the end of the twentieth century, and seem to suggest that the increasing hegemony of global capitalism sounds a potential death knell for notions of national sovereignty and identity. But is the nation so easily elided from view? That is one of the questions I shall consider in the next chapter, when I turn my attention to two novels by Ishiguro's contemporary, Timothy Mo: *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage*.

Chapter 3

Time and Nation: *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage*

Introduction

So far, I have suggested that Kazuo Ishiguro's novels employ the fragmented historical narratives of their protagonist-narrators to map the socio-cultural change that occurred in the wake of the Second World War, in particular drawing attention to the rise of America as a global hegemonic force and, in large part as a consequence of America's newfound geo-political dominance, foregrounding the emerging cosmopolitanism of the final two decades of the twentieth century. In Chapter One, I read Ishiguro's first two novels – *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* – as characterised by a sense of their narrators and other protagonists being 'out of time'; that is, they are excluded from the changes brought about by the events at the end of the war. As a result, I argue, these novels also highlight the unevenness of globalisation and cosmopolitanism at the moment of the novels' publication and suggest that notions of transnational living often fail to recognise that here too there are those who are excluded, or consigned to the margins. Whilst the same may be said of the narrators and protagonists in *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*, in Chapter Two I suggested that these novels are additionally characterised by the sense that 'time runs out'. I argue that whilst they remain concerned with the changes wrought by the Second World War, the additional time pressure and sense of looming deadlines endow these two novels with an even greater contemporary relevance so that they are as equally concerned with the socio-political present and near future as they are with the past.

In the remainder of this thesis, I wish to build on this analysis by turning to four novels written by one of Ishiguro's contemporaries, Timothy Mo. In the final chapter,

I will attend to Mo's two most recent novels, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* and *Renegade of Halo*², suggesting that both tackle the contemporary cosmopolitan condition – and, in particular, the experience of 'cosmopolitan time' – far more closely than any of the other novels in this thesis. Firstly, however, I will turn my attention in this chapter to two of Mo's earlier novels, *An Insular Possession*¹⁹³ and *The Redundancy of Courage*¹⁹⁴. Both, I shall suggest, are concerned with the confrontation between the pedagogical construct of the nation and the performative temporality of notions of identity which transcend such national borders. To a large extent then, they explore the relationship between 'time and nation'. I shall begin by considering Mo's 1986 novel, *An Insular Possession*, which takes as its historical crisis point the opium wars and the resultant acquisition of Hong Kong as a British territory. My analysis will begin by exploring the peculiar temporality exposed by the narrative. This temporality, I will suggest, opens up a potential space of cosmopolitan exchange. However, the narrative suggests that such potential is largely unfulfilled, pointing instead to a cultural incommensurability between nations which speaks as much about the contemporary period as it does the narrative's historical moment. With that in mind, I will conclude my analysis of *An Insular Possession* by exploring the ways in which the novel projects forward to the future return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty even as it narrates its founding as a British territory. Similarly, my analysis of *The Redundancy of Courage* focuses on the ways in which that novel is also characterised by a temporal framework concerned with looking forward. In particular, I shall examine Mo's use of prolepsis in this novel, suggesting that this opens up a space in which Ng, the novel's narrator, can record his alternative history

¹⁹³ Timothy Mo, *An Insular Possession* (London: Paddleless Press, 2002). **All further page references refer to this edition.**

¹⁹⁴ Timothy Mo, *The Redundancy of Courage* (London: Paddleless Press, 2002). **All further page references refer to this edition.**

of Danu and simultaneously undermines any authority that narrative may have. Central to that narrative is Ng's negotiation of personal and national identity, a negotiation which takes place against the larger backdrop of global politics, invasion and resistance. Whilst Ng appears to claim a degree of historical agency which evades the American protagonists in *An Insular Possession*, I will conclude by suggesting that such agency is undermined by the temporal ambiguity with which the novel ends.

An Insular Possession

The opening chapter of *An Insular Possession* sweeps the reader cinematically down the Pearl River from its source, deep in the inaccessible heart of China, through the great trading city of Canton and onwards down through the Pearl River Delta to the Portuguese enclave of Macao and the barren and largely uninhabited islands which lie at the delta's mouth. By beginning the novel on the river, and by locating much of the action which follows either on or beside that ninety-mile stretch of water between Canton and the estuary at Macao, Mo draws upon the familiar trope of the river as metaphor for the passage of time. Indeed, even in this first chapter the river appears to stage that temporal conflict between the pedagogical and the performative identified by Homi K. Bhabha. With its source 'somewhere' (p.9) upriver, from whence it 'winds a sinuous course' (p.9), witnessing ever increasing evidence of life and habitation as it progresses towards 'old Canton, already in Chase's and Eastman's day an ancient place with a dubious and blood-stained past' (p.10), the river seems to mirror that timeless, linear progression associated with the construct of nation. As the narrator reminds us, 'time and the river sweep on' (p.11). But as it sweeps on, that timeless linearity is challenged by the arrival of foreign agents. Beyond Canton, the river undergoes a 'complete transformation of character' (p.11), shaped by those who bend it to their own purpose, those who fish upon it, who trade upon it, who harness

it, until finally it reaches the estuary at Macao, the end of its journey but ‘for the foreigner its beginning’ (p.12). The river is turned on its head by the arrival of the foreigner, just as notions of individual and national identity are challenged by contact with those who lie beyond the borders of the nation. But that cross-cultural contact does not always result in heightened understanding and cohabitation. Above all else, *An Insular Possession* explores the incommensurability of cultures alien to each other, and the consequences arising when these cultures clash.

In this chapter, I want to look at how the treatment of time in *An Insular Possession*, contributes to that sense of incommensurability. Drawing upon Bhabha’s notion of the ‘time-lag’, I want to suggest that the novel depicts a kind of distended present which opens up a potential space of enunciation and cross-cultural negotiation centred upon Canton, a nineteenth-century ‘cosmopolitan resort for all kinds and complexions of men whom curiosity or commerce, or both, have brought halfway round the world and back again’ (p.10). Whilst this distended present is evident throughout the narrative, I will concentrate here on three particular ways in which it is represented and its potential explored: in the trope of the river; in the protagonists’ efforts at linguistic and cultural translation; and through the ongoing battle between the classical discipline of painting and the emerging technology of the daguerreotype. Each of these means of exploring the time-lag serves, I will suggest, to illustrate the failure of those agents present to realise the potential of that temporal space of negotiation and cross-cultural contact. I will also argue that this failure is exacerbated by the technological change which is all around and which results in a spatial and temporal shrinking of the world which the protagonists inhabit, creating a sense of the acceleration of time which stands in contrast to the temporal deceleration of the

distended present and which points towards a contemporary relevance in a novel which is ostensibly about events which occurred some century and a half earlier.

Time-lag

The river stands at the structural heart of the novel. As Elaine Ho observes, ‘the Pearl River is at once the geographical site of imperial conflict, the spatial and temporal figuration of imperialism’s changing fortunes, and the naturalising trope of its processes.’¹⁹⁵ It is also one of the principal means by which the novel’s temporal framework is laid out. Stranded in Canton during the monsoon season Eastman, one of the novel’s principal protagonists, writes to Alice Remington in Macao that ‘I regarded the river...and I was struck by the contemplation of how you must some days hence feed your eyes upon these same waters I so mournfully gazed upon.’ (pp.175-176) More than a mere physical entity, the river takes on a temporal quality, underlining the possibility of multiple ‘present’ moments which undermine the linearity of both narrative and history. Thus the American traders ‘have the sensation of being removed from the events which will shape their lives and fortunes. To return to New York...entails sailing across three oceans and could take almost a year.’ (p.25) This temporal dimension has implications for the way in which the characters experience history, and in particular for the way in which the present moment is encountered. British affairs in the region fall under the influence of the British Governor General in India: ‘for return dispatches to come...will take at least six months, by which time a crisis may well be over or a tiny cloud have become a storm.’ (p.25) This rather unsettling experience of the present is neatly illustrated by the recollection of the atmosphere between the American and British traders in the region during the Anglo-American War of 1812:

¹⁹⁵ Elaine Yee Lin Ho, *Timothy Mo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.70.

It was hard to think of fellow-exiles one had known for years as enemies overnight, hallucination made harder to accept as reality by the fact that their respective nations had been at war six months before they heard of it, while they had been carrying on their daily lives quite unaware they were drinking and playing with mortal foes. Equally, it did not escape anyone, peace might well have broken out six months before they got wind of it (p.149)

The present moment here contains traces of both past and future – the sense of ‘now’ is haunted by that element of the war which already lies in the past, and by the promise of a future peace which may already have occurred. As such, the present is distended in a way which recalls Paul Ricoeur’s reading of Augustine’s threefold present: ‘the past and the future exist in the [present], through memory on the one hand and expectation on the other’¹⁹⁶. Isolated and distanced from the centre of empire, and prisoners to the slow pace of technology and travel, this is the experience of the traders and assorted others present in Canton.

Another possible means of theorising this elongated present is through Bhabha’s notion of the “time-lag”. Starting from Franz Fanon’s theory of the belated arrival of the black man, Bhabha identifies the time-lag as ‘a contingent moment...in the signification of closure’¹⁹⁷, a disjunctive temporality between signifier and signified which opens up a potential space of enunciation, resistance and renegotiation. Bhabha’s theory of the time-lag serves to open up a space of potential agency and autonomy in which those subjects written-out of official histories might find a place of resistance and enunciation. It is in the time-lag that the novel’s American protagonists – Walter Eastman and Gideon Chase – attempt to open up a performative space of translation and cross-cultural contact.

¹⁹⁶ Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.82.

¹⁹⁷ Bhabha, *Location*, p.183.

In search of a 'perfected correspondence'

One of the principal means by which Eastman and Chase attempt to achieve this cross-cultural contact is through the founding of a newspaper, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, with the aim of standing in opposition to the established newssheet in the region, *The Canton Monitor*. The *Monitor* is the pedagogical voice of Empire, hectoring the authorities for military intervention to protect the illegal British trade in opium and demanding the founding of an insular possession to allow that trade to proceed unhindered. It is their moral opposition to this trade which compels Eastman and Chase to found the *River Bee*, but the newspaper has a second aim, the first edition stating that 'we shall from time to time enliven our organ with specimens of anecdotes or definitions, both curious and we trust instructive, as they relate to our customers, suppliers, retainers, entertainers, baiters, occasional murderers and pillagers, but always reluctant hosts – the Chinese.' (p.295) This attempt to translate and make sense of Chinese customs and practices points to a possible fulfilment of the potential of the third-space created by the time-lag. But the litany of negative adjectives used to describe the Chinese even in the act of introducing the series hints at the difficulties which lie ahead.

In the event, the series of articles penned by Chase, which aim to make the Chinese and their customs less idiosyncratic, serve instead to draw attention to the apparent untranslatability of these customs into a Western value-set. Instead of demystifying the Chinese, articles such as *What are those sinister forms?*, *Land feuds among the Chinese*, and *Apparent inhumanity of the Chinese* serve only to paint the natives as barbaric and backward 'others'. In the latter of the articles mentioned, Chase attempts to explain why the Chinese would decline to come to the aid of a drowning

countryman: 'The penal code of the empire states that he who discovers the corpse of a person who has met with an unnatural death shall be charged with the responsibility of ascertaining how the deceased met his end – and that until such investigation be satisfactorily concluded, the hapless finder...shall be held guilty of his death...Oh! What a capital black joke is this...'. (p.313) The chasm between the two cultures, evident in Chase's exclamation of the 'capital joke', is encapsulated by the response he encounters when reciting – by way of reciprocation - the tale of the Good Samaritan to a native: 'he wiped tears from his eyes – of mirth and disbelief.' (p.313) Chase can only conclude that 'truly, life is strange and holds out some perverted instances.' (p.314) Time and again Chase's well-meaning but idealistic attempts to transcend cultural differences are dashed by the apparently irreconcilable differences between the two cultures as well as his own inability to set aside his cultural beliefs and preconceptions. Ultimately, as John McLeod observes, '[d]espite a sympathetic engagement with Chinese culture, [Chase] has difficulty in dislodging the dominant [Western] assumptions which...shape the representations that can be produced.'¹⁹⁸

The articles on Chinese practices are published in the *River Bee* under the pseudonym Pursuer. But these articles are not Chase's only pursuit of cultural translation. Convinced that 'no enduring or equal relations may be entertained between ourselves and [China's] inhabitants...until a perfected correspondence is established between us' (p.70), Chase undertakes clandestine tuition in Chinese, an activity made necessarily covert by the fact that the Chinese rulers have proclaimed it an offence, punishable by death, for foreigners to learn their language. Unperturbed by the Mandarins' isolationist tendencies, Chase sees the acquisition of the Chinese

¹⁹⁸ John McLeod, 'On the Chase for Gideon Nye: History and Representation in Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 34.2 (1999), p.69.

language as a means of achieving what he describes in an anonymous letter to the rival *Monitor* as ‘a happy medium between a cringing and meek submissiveness...and the extreme bloodthirstiness you are pleased to advocate.’ (p.107) And yet, Chase’s acquisition of the Chinese language has the very opposite effect from that he intends. Having insulted Eastman, the Chinese servant Ah Sam reflects that ‘fortunately Stripling Who Knew Talk wasn’t there. A very dangerous fellow, he was.’ (p.495) Far from creating some kind of bridge between the nations, his ability to speak Chinese serves only to make him more dangerous still in the eyes of the natives.

Chase’s attempts to find that perfected correspondence which he seeks are constantly frustrated. Commissioned to act as interpreter for the British forces, his first task is to translate a missive from the belligerent Chinese Commissioner Keshen to the British commander Eliot. Despite tagging the letter as ‘a true translation’ (p.511), Chase cannot resist adding a postscript twice the length of the translated letter itself in which he explains to Eliot in great detail his reasons for claiming that ‘this letter is unsatisfactory in the extreme.’ (p.511) Chase finds that although the letter can be translated literally, its meaning cannot be so simply decoded, and so his translation must be supplemented by an additional interpretive passage which attempts to explain the Chinese proclamation. Worse still for Chase, his linguistic skills – acquired for the noblest of reasons- are quite often turned to violent means. Observing the British bombardment of the Chinese, Chase cannot stop himself from bringing his own supplementary knowledge to bear: ““These are Manchu troops,” he informs Captain Hall. “Tartars,” he adds, as Captain Hall shows no signs of recognition. “Their bravest troops.”” (p.516) Chase’s expertise allows the British to concentrate heavier

firepower upon these more dangerous troops, turning the knowledge which he gained for peaceable ends into a weapon of Western imperialism. A similar effect occurs when Chase is required to pen a proclamation re-assuring the citizens of Canton that the imminent firing of heavy artillery is not an assault but rather is intended to mark the Queen's birthday. When that barrage is quickly followed by a genuine attack on the city, Chase is left to bemoan the manner in which his attempts at translation are turned to military ends:

I regard it as hypocritical and provocative in the extreme...to send the citizens of Canton a proclamation assuring them of their immunity from the guns of the British fleet as a preliminary, a bare two hours after the discharge of an innocuous salute, to a general, indiscriminate, and destructive bombardment of the town. In what sense may the civilian population of the city understand any similar future declarations...other than as cynical and heartless pleasantries? (p.585)

Chase's various attempts to form a perfect correspondence –both linguistically and culturally- with the Chinese founder against the louder discourses of both British Imperial hegemony and Chinese isolationism. In a bitter twist which recalls Ah Sam's acknowledgement of the threat Chase's linguistic prowess poses, Chase finds himself included on a Chinese proclamation offering a reward for the death of the leading British Generals:

Chai-A i-See. A Barbarian of the Flowery-Flag Barbarians...He knows writing...and is a young man of surpassing personal goodness. This man is very dangerous. Slaughter without the smallest mercy. (p.536)

The apparent impossibility of a correspondence between the two cultures is evident in the Chinese interpretation of Chase's name and their metaphoric representation of the Americans as the 'flowery-flag barbarians', whilst the laudable and entirely peaceful motives behind Chase's efforts at linguistic translation are completely undone by the brutal instruction that he should be 'slaughter[ed] without the slightest mercy'.

The incommensurability of the various nations is illustrated once more in a humorous scene towards the end of the novel as the Americans and the Chinese servants gather

to watch the English play cricket, a game which Eastman ironically observes ‘[is] played so slowly, I allow I could contrive to capture it on the Daguerreotype.’ (p.646)

The manner in which both the Americans and the Chinese interpret the game before them serves to highlight the way in which cultures are always open to hybridisation, interpretation and negotiation. Eastman suggests that cricket:

...could be adapted into a game more suited to the spirit of the New World [...] We’ll get rid of the wicket. I don’t care overly for the wickets. They give you but the single chance. The game’s too darned unforgiving. Knock ‘em down and you’re out of the great game of life. What do emigrants come for except for the second chance in life? *So*, sir, no wicket to defend and we’ll give them *three* misses... This will encourage them to be more emphatic and attack and amass more points, rather than merely defend what they already have. Is that not a pioneer for you? On the same tack, why have the two hitters [...] The spirit of the backwoodman is simplicity. We’ll just have the one. The running up and down is monotonous, and shall be redundant with the just one. There is more drama in running a circle or triangle, still better. (p.646)

The suggestion that Eastman, alongside his innovatory achievements in the field of photography (and we *are* supposed to note the surname, with its nod towards George Eastman, founder of the Kodak company), is also the inventor of the national American pastime of baseball light-heartedly draws further attention to the contingency of recorded history which is one of the novel’s key themes. But the performative act of adapting the rules of cricket to better suit the frontier spirit of the New World also draws attention to the way in which authority is always tentative and inevitably open to negotiation and revision. The game is likewise refigured by the Chinese in a manner which allows them to assimilate it within their own cultural values:

The Chinese watching begin to have an inkling...the object must be to strike the other stick-man’s shrine, the thrower helping you by bouncing the ball off your stick and, of course, if he hits your shrine, he releases you from the running against your rival. (p.645)

The entire scene is humorous and playful but I would suggest that the reference to cricket is by no means an accidental one. The modern map of the cricketing world closely resembles that of the British Empire at its height – indeed, it might be argued that cricket is one means by which the colonised nations have resisted and fought

back, to the extent that - in the ultimate act of mimicry - they have regularly outstripped their former colonial masters. And yet Hong Kong and the United States are amongst the few former parts of the British Empire where the sport has failed to endure. As such, the failure of both the Americans and the Chinese to interpret the cricket match accurately, or more specifically their reinterpretation of the game within their own frames of reference, draws attention not only to the intrinsic incommensurability of these disparate cultures at the time of the narrated events but also to the relative political and cultural differences between Britain, America and China at the time of the novel's composition.

Technological change

One feature of the distended present, or the time-lag, within *An Insular Possession*, then, is that it represents a zone of frustrated negotiation and failed cross-cultural contact, be that in the form of *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*'s failure to open up a serious counter-narrative to the hegemonic voice of *The Canton Monitor*, the misappropriation of Chase's linguistic translations or the misinterpretation of the English game of cricket by the American and Chinese spectators who stand, both literally and metaphorically, on the boundary. The ambiguity of that distended present is further emphasised by the fact that this temporal gap is continually shrinking. The world in which Chase and Eastman find themselves is one of rapid and sometimes bemusing technological change. One edition of the *River Bee* brings news from New York of a new system of communication pioneered by Samuel B. Morse which promises that messages 'might be received instantaneous with their despatch at a distance of tens of miles.' (p.447) Back on the river, meanwhile, the emergence of the commercial paddle steamers, as well as proving decisive when adapted to military use, also shortens the temporal distances in the region, so that for example,

‘communication between [Macao] and Canton must soon become a matter of hours...rather than days and nights.’ (p.139) The experiences of Eastman, Chase *et al* as they try to keep pace with the frantic sense of change engendered by such developments in the technologies of communication and mobility draws parallels with the experience of living in the final decades of the twentieth century and invites interpretations of the novel as a work of contemporary fiction concerned as much with the world in which it is written and received as it is with the historical period which it takes as its setting. As Ho suggests, ‘*An Insular Possession* has its eye critically trained on diachronic processes that are not only germane to the period it narrates but also to its own late twentieth century moment of rapidly expanding information technology’¹⁹⁹.

Nowhere in the novel is this sense of technological and temporal change more evident than in the ongoing negotiation between the traditional art of painting and the emerging technology of the daguerreotype, an early form of photography. Both contribute to the novel’s larger critique of the discursive modes of historical representation of which the *River Bee* and Chase’s linguistic interpretation are further examples. The unreliability of such apparently realist modes of representation as painting and photography is brought quickly to the fore. Early in the novel Eastman – who is under the tutelage of the area’s artist in residence, the cantankerous old Irishman, Harry O’Rourke – explains to Alice Remington his reasons for adding a non-existent tree to her portrait: ‘[The branch] is but a device, not exactly a convention, perhaps an accepted fiction, by which I may draw your eye in, making the scene complete and...somehow more outstanding.’ (p.128). Similarly, in an early

¹⁹⁹ Ho, p.79.

chapter we find O'Rourke himself out 'on the prowl' for subjects. When he comes across a young native girl carrying a baby he paints the girl but omits the baby, for '[h]e has quite a ruthless eye, which eliminates what it does not want to have.' (p.45) As the novel's intrusive third-person narrator suggests, 'what O'Rourke offers at his very best is a perfected alternative world, which at the same time is no distortion of the real, for if he changes by leaving out all that is inessential to the illusion, at least he imparts nothing that is false.' (p.44)

Whilst such illusion comes naturally to an old hand like Harry, it is something of an anathema to Eastman, denizen of the new world and the shining beacon for truth, democracy and anti-imperialism. Little wonder, then, that he seizes upon the emergent technology of the daguerreotype, demonstrating in the process an admirable willingness to change with the times and embrace emerging technologies which, perhaps, makes him the prototype for the late twentieth century world citizen. The daguerreotype promises to democratise the world of visual representation by taking portraiture out of the hands of the gifted few. Yet this democratic side to the technology comes with the trace of a less egalitarian function. The daguerreotype is, as Eastman suggests in an editorial in the *River Bee*:

[a] method [that] is at once *Democratic* and *Imperial*. Democratic because after a little simple trial and error, not to be compared with the labour of learning the painterly craft, excellent results may be secured by all. Imperial because it is a most voracious medium, which is capable of annexing the entire solid world and recreating it in two dimensions, instead of three. (p.642 – original emphasis)

Eastman learns an early lesson in the democracy of the daguerreotype when a group portrait designed to show off the new machine is ruined by the grinning figure of Ah Cheong, O'Rourke's Chinese servant, emptying a chamber pot in the background. The appearance of a native servant about his work is, it would appear, just *too* democratic for even the liberal Eastman. As O'Rourke gleefully points out, 'It is the

essence of the whole process...Select your subject, sir, or it will select you.’ (p.510) It is a lesson that Eastman learns well. A little later in the novel Chase comes ashore during the British bombardment of a fort to find Eastman and the British Lieutenant Wheeldon draping a dead Chinese artilleryman over a cannon in order to reconstruct an action shot of the British assault. Far from being the democratic portrayer of reality, Eastman’s efforts – which will later appear in the *River Bee* – serve to strengthen the traditional, pedagogical version of history perpetuated by the British. Indeed, the threat posed to the Chinese by the daguerreotype is encapsulated by the fact that ‘[t]o the surviving Chinese, scattering on the bank, the brass lens has all the appearance of a new and still deadlier weapon of war (which perhaps it is), the more destructive for its small size and apparently innocuous wooden body.’ (p.544) To return to Eastman’s earlier description, the imperial function of the daguerreotype is clearly privileged over the democratic, and the likening of the machine to a weapon of war (emphasised by the narrator’s knowing aside) points to the fact that the performative potential of the daguerreotype is easily subsumed by the function that it can serve in the construction and perpetuation of the imperial narrative.

In terms of representation, then, the daguerreotype is quickly discovered to be as ambiguous and subjective as have been the attempts at cross-cultural contact through the newspaper and through Chase’s linguistic translations. But in some ways the temporal operation of the daguerreotype also offers a model for the ‘time-lag’ which I have identified in the present of *An Insular Possession*. Part of the process requires the photographer to ‘[r]emove the brass cap or disc to expose the plate to the light of the sun. Wait for it to take the image – smoke your cigar the while. And, like magic, the perfect representation...’ (p.497). It is the waiting for the machine to take the

image – or, if we prefer, the smoking of the cigar – which stands as a microcosm of the distended present in the novel. Like the time-lag, the period of exposure – which Eastman initially reckons at ten minutes – represents a possible space of resistance and enunciation, as illustrated by the intervention of Ah Cheung and his chamber pot in Eastman's group portrait. The time-lag inherent in capturing the daguerreotype image is problematic in other ways too. Eastman is compelled to construct the scene with the dead artilleryman through his frustration at being unable to capture the events live. Standing aboard the steamer *Nemesis* as the battle rages, Eastman can only look on in frustration:

Of course, there is no way in which his exposure time can be sufficiently shortened to cope with these fast and violent events. What a dramatic scene! To miss it is frustrating, maddening. (p.545)

For the time being, ironically, it is O'Rourke and the more leisurely art of painting which holds the day, as Eastman is forced to acknowledge again on the heights above Hong Kong harbour, where the sheer scale of the view before them means that, for now, 'tis far better left to Harry.' (p.636)

For now, perhaps, but not for long. Like the other technological advances taking place all around them, developments in the field will mean that soon the exposure time required is far less, with far-reaching consequences for the fields of painting and photography and, presumably, for sales of cigars. In a fictional Gazetteer in the novel's appendix we learn that the vast bulk of O'Rourke's work was destroyed in a fire and that all that remains a sketch for a theatre production which features in the novel's main narrative and two daguerreotype photographs of his work. It is an ironic conclusion which points to the ever changing, ever shrinking world which lies in wait for the inhabitants of the newly founded colony of Hong Kong, and which invites the reader to consider the circumstances of the novel's composition. Published in 1986,

less than two years after the joint Sino-British agreement to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, the novel casts its gaze forward to that event even as it looks back to the founding of Hong Kong as a British possession. As such, the narrative of that founding is haunted in its telling by Hong Kong's future return to China.

This doubling of past and present is evidenced in several aspects of the novel's structure, most notably in its present tense narration, which is delivered in a presumed idiom that purports to be that of the nineteenth century, but also in its frequent proleptic leaps, and in the fact that the narrative is focalised through American characters, with both the Chinese and the British, and indeed Hong Kong itself, largely absent from the narrative. Perhaps most significant of these is the fact that the novel is narrated in the present tense. As Mark Currie reminds us, most novels are written in the preterite, or past tense which alerts the reader to the fact that the time of the novel's narration lies after the events being narrated; 'because it is the past tense we know that there is a future present, in relation to which the present of the narrative is the past'²⁰⁰. In *An Insular Possession* Mo breaks from the preterite to narrate events which happened nearly two centuries ago in the present tense, further blurring the line between past and present and forcing the reader into consideration of the novel's contemporary meaning. Thus, for example, when Gideon Chase asks '[c]an it be...that change is not slow, gradual, to be defined as a process but is in fact rapid, sudden, an event? That, once beyond a certain point, action follows action with bewildering rapidity?' (p.230), the reader cannot help but wonder if, whilst Chase refers to the changes taking place before him in South Asia in the nineteenth century,

²⁰⁰ Currie, *About Time*, p.50.

Mo invites us to ponder the changes taking place in culture and society in the novel's moment of composition in the late twentieth century.

The reader is similarly invited to cast his or her attention forward from the time of the narrated events by the narrative's frequent leaps into the future. I shall examine in more detail the structures of prolepsis shortly, in my analysis of *The Redundancy of Courage*. For the moment, a handful of examples will help to illustrate the ways in which Mo uses prolepsis in *An Insular Possession* to give the novel a contemporary resonance. The novel's attention to the future is neatly encapsulated in the advice given to Chase by another of the American traders whilst out hunting ducks on the river: 'aim where the target bird *will* be when the shot arrives, not where it is in the moment of taking aim. That's pure history, my boy, an event long in the past, and you will miss. You must anticipate what its present position is going to be and take a lead' (p.101). It is sage advice, and something the reader of *An Insular Possession* does well to remember. The story of the founding of Hong Kong, Mo appears to say, is 'an event long past'. The reader must not be fooled by the present tense in which the novel is narrated, instead anticipating Hong Kong's 'present position' and, with it, the contemporary relevance of the narrative and, indeed, of its narrator. That narrator, intrusive throughout the novel, gives early evidence of his position significantly anterior to the events narrated in that opening chapter which describes the course of the Pearl River, when s/he comments that a particular feature 'can become apparent either suddenly, with elevation, as recently in modern times from an aircraft, or slowly, as it might to a hydrographer like Captain Belcher or the great Horsburgh' (p.12). The reference to air travel specifically locates the narrator in contemporary or 'modern times', in relation to the time locus of the novel, represented by Captain

Belcher, who in both the novel and in real life takes possession of Hong Kong as a British possession in 1841. Similarly, the narrator describes the Factories in Canton where the western protagonists reside and conduct their trade as ‘resembling a row of tiny one-room cottages or, though built before the significant conjunction of steam and iron, a line of railway carriages’ (p.21). Significantly, each of these examples of prolepsis in the novel draws attention to modern technologies of travel and mobility, inviting contemporary and indeed cosmopolitan readings of the novel.

If proleptic references to future technologies give the narrative a contemporary spin then so too do the novel’s references to Hong Kong itself. Although it is the insular possession of the title, Hong Kong plays a marginal role in the novel. Much of the narrative is concerned with the Opium Wars and the activities of the western traders in and around Canton and Macao in the years preceding Hong Kong’s founding as a British territory. As Ho observes:

Hong Kong has no presence in the novel as community or culture, except in the final moments as the haven or retreat of foreigners displaced from one trading post to another. [...] Hong Kong’s identity is predicated on its history, on its coming into being as a colonial possession; the moment the city comes into being in the narrative is the moment of colonisation. But very soon after that moment, the narrative closes around it. The insular possession is given no story.²⁰¹

Something of the ambiguity of that ‘coming into being as a colonial possession’ is captured in the Canton Monitor in the juxtaposition of an awareness that ‘the island and harbour of Hong Kong are a most valuable and eligible position upon the coast of China, separated, defensible, and ideally suited in all respects for conducting maritime trade with the city of Canton’ (p.532) with the realisation that ‘[s]terile, wild, rocky, and infertile, Hong Kong has nothing to recommend it but its position and its deep water’ (p.532). There is an ironic tone to Mo’s writing here, one which acknowledges

²⁰¹ Ho, p.86.

Hong Kong's twentieth century prosperity alongside its less auspicious beginnings. The island may be sterile, wild and rocky but both author and reader know that it will grow to become the archetypical global city of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a point perhaps also tacitly acknowledged by the *Monitor* when it proclaims, some months later, that 'we feel bound to own that we...have every confidence in the security and prosperity of the infant and newest possession of Britannia' (p.639). Again, the reader is invited to see the irony. By the time of the novel's publication Hong Kong is neither 'infant' nor 'new'; rather it is fully developed into a global economic force and stands, for the time being at least, as one of poor Britannia's few remaining possessions.

In *An Insular Possession*, then, the role (or relative lack thereof) played by Hong Kong itself draws attention to the novel's contemporary moment. Similarly, Mo's focus upon American protagonists might seem to resemble the geopolitical landscape of the late twentieth century rather than that of South Asia in the nineteenth century. We do come into contact with a handful of British characters, notably the Anglo-Irish painter, O'Rourke. But, as the narrator is quick to point out, O'Rourke 'is not a stock Company Briton.' (p.16) Instead, the stock Company British position is represented by the *Canton Monitor*, which jealously guards the interests of the British traders at Canton. It argues loudly against trade restrictions imposed by the Chinese, defends the trade in opium which the Chinese wish to end, and reprimands the British authorities when it thinks they fail to stand up to their hosts. Evidence of Mo's lack of interest in individual British identity comes in the fact that the *Canton Monitor's* editor remains anonymous until the end of the novel (at one point the narrator intrusively, and somewhat disingenuously, suggests that '[w]e do not need to know his name or his

personal appearance. Gideon, Walter, Harry know it, of course' – p.450) where he is revealed by the fictitious *Gazetteer of Place Names and Biographies Relative to the Early China Coast*, to be one A.J. Boylan, a character who is in fact, like O'Rourke, of Irish birth. McLeod has demonstrated that a number of the protagonists in *An Insular Possession* are based on real people, and this extends to the newspaper edited by Eastman and Chase, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, which has an historical counterpart.²⁰² However, Boylan appears to be Mo's own creation, and there is no evidence of an historical equivalent of the *Canton Monitor*, which Mo seems to have invented in order to represent the stock British imperial character and to counterpoint the ideological project of the *Lin Tin Bulletin*.

As for the Chinese, we are given almost no insight into their lives at all. The general attitude of the Chinese authorities mirrors that described by G.B. Endacott in *A History of Hong Kong*: 'China had no need of European products, it was westerners and not the Chinese who sought the trade which was a favour granted to them on Chinese terms.'²⁰³ Other than this arrogance and insularity on an official level, we tend to be confronted in *An Insular Possession* with representations of the Chinese either as a threatening mob or else as backward peasants. Elaine Yee Lin Ho bemoans the fact that in his representations of the Chinese Mo resorts to little more than 'hackneyed-stereotypes'.²⁰⁴ For Ho, 'this sounds a discordant note in a novel which seeks to rewrite history from a full awareness of history's fictionalities'²⁰⁵. But having represented the Chinese successfully and to critical acclaim in his first two novels, *The Monkey King* and *Sour Sweet*, the absence of any such representations in this

²⁰² McLeod, 'On the Chase for Gideon Nye', pp.61-73.

²⁰³ G.B. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p6.

²⁰⁴ Ho, p84.

²⁰⁵ Ho, p86.

novel seems intentional on Mo's part. Furthermore, the novel which precedes *An Insular Possession* may provide us with a guide as to how we might approach the latter work. *Sour Sweet* follows the Cantonese Chen family as they settle in London, but the novel, like the Chens themselves, pays almost no attention whatsoever to the British hosts. Mo's interest is in the marginal figures who find themselves on the edges of a society, at odds with or alien to the culture with which they are faced. The same is true of *An Insular Possession*, where much of the interest lies in the struggle of the novel's two American protagonists, Walter Eastman and Gideon Chase, to forge a distinctive identity for themselves and to make their voices heard against the beating drum of Empire and the closed doors of the Chinese. But the marginal position occupied by Eastman and Chase in nineteenth-century China is counterpointed by the hegemonic position of America, particularly in relation to China and Britain, at the time of the novel's publication, so that the relative silence of the British and the Chinese in the novel takes on a more contemporary resonance.

It is worth pausing, therefore, to explore in more detail the American position in *An Insular Possession*. The novel begins with Eastman and Chase in the employ of Meridian, Remington, Remington and Co., an American company trading in Canton. Ho suggests that in dealing with American characters 'Mo has taken into account the ambivalent position of the United States during the period of the novel; an ex-colony hostile towards European expansionism, it is, however, as much interested in trade in China as the European imperialist nations.'²⁰⁶ Prime among the concerns for the Americans in southern China is the establishment of commerce. However, at that point in history '[t]he United States had no formal treaties with the Chinese [and]

²⁰⁶ Ho, pp.73-4.

instead depended on, and co-operated with, British power'.²⁰⁷ The relatively complementary positions of the American traders and their British counterparts is evident in a real-life proclamation written by American merchants in Canton in 1839; 'we express our opinion that the United States Government should take immediate measures; and, if deemed advisable, [should] act in concert with the Government of Great Britain [...] in their endeavours to establish commercial relations with this empire upon a safe and honourable footing, such as exists between all friendly powers'.²⁰⁸ What emerges, then, in examining the American position at the time, is an uncomfortable compromise between an intrinsic opposition to British imperialism and a shared interest in opening China up to trade.

Any discomfort felt by Eastman, Chase and the other young Americans regarding their Company's eagerness to exploit trade opportunities with China is mitigated somewhat by the fact that Meridian's success is initially achieved 'without soiling their hands, ships' bottoms, or consciences with drug.' (p.23). We learn instead that Meridian 'import Canadian ginseng, North American furs, sandalwood from nameless South Seas islands, sea-cucumbers and bird's nests from East Indian archipelagos, and exchange these for silk, porcelain, lacquer, curios and some tea' (pp.23-4), all of which seems, on the surface at least, wholesome and ethical compared to the 'fabulously profitable traffic' (p.23) in opium undertaken by the British traders but foregone by their morally superior American cousins. Yet a closer look at these fair-trade wares highlights the ambiguity of the American position. In *Culture and*

²⁰⁷ Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: US Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1994), p102. It might be noted that the relationship described, an informal relationship with Britain as the senior partner and America as the junior, is a neat reversal of the 'special relationship' between Britain and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.

²⁰⁸ Thomas G. Paterson and Dennis Merrill (eds.), *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, Volume 1: to 1920 (Lexington, Ma.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), p302.

Imperialism, Edward Said draws attention to the paradox between American literature's 'ferocious anti-colonialism' and its obsession with 'United States expansion westward, along with the wholesale colonization and destruction of native American life'²⁰⁹, and Mo exploits that same ambiguity here. The trade in North American furs, for example, hints at the destruction of Native American life, whilst the source of some of the other goods – nameless South Sea Islands and East Indian archipelagos – is suggestive of the exploitation of blank white spaces on maps. Thus we find that Eastman's position is similarly ambiguous; he 'is opposed to the traffic in opium but is otherwise as keen as the next man to open the empire [of China] to trade' (p.26), whilst the senior partner Jasper Corrigan seems keen to take upon himself something of the white man's burden when he proclaims that '[i]t is our duty through the instrumentality of trade, to bring China into the family of nations and, indeed, into a free and unimpeded intercourse with not only the rest of mankind but our Maker. Trade will bring civilisation to the half-civilised Chinese and, as naturally, the great truths of Christianity will follow in the wake of trade.' (pp.26-7)

The idiom may be nineteenth century, but the commitment to trade, the demand for 'free and unimpeded intercourse', even the religious overtones, owe something to the late twentieth century. It is impossible to read Mo's novel without bringing to bear knowledge of late-twentieth century globalisation, and of the role the barren rock of Hong Kong will play in that process. As the narrator comments at one point, 'there are larger moments, not apprehended at the time but perceived only in retrospect' (p.443). As I shall explore shortly, it is a sentiment which will be voiced again in Mo's next novel, *The Redundancy of Courage*, and one also which draws attention to

²⁰⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp.74-75.

the ludic possibilities open to an author aware of the ironic gap between the time of the narrated events and the time of their narration. The very deliberate manipulation of time is also foregrounded in the novel's second appendix, which purports to provide edited extracts from (by then) Professor Gideon Chase's unpublished autobiography, *The Morning of My Days*²¹⁰. This appendix, along with a second which features a fictional *Gazetteer of Place Names and Biographies Relative to the Early Chinese Coast*, is another of the ways in which Mo draws attention to the temporal gap between the time of the narrated events and the time of their narration. Amongst Chase's reflections is the observation that '[s]peaking for myself, it is speed, the attainment of velocities undreamed of a hundred years ago, which has modified my view of the world and time. Does this not reflect an inner sense of accelerating time? As we grow older, the years go faster, till they speed by all of a blur' (pp.732-3). As the novel draws to a close, the voices of Chase, the narrator and the author appear to converge, to blur into one: Chase may well be reflecting upon the extraordinary technological changes he has witnessed across the span of the nineteenth century but changes 'undreamed of a hundred years ago' and an 'inner sense of accelerating time' resonate loudly with the present-day reader, suggesting that Chase's voice is, at this point at least, as contemporary as it is historical. But if *An Insular Possession* is, to some extent, a contemporary cosmopolitan novel then what does it have to say about that world. I have attempted in my analysis of the novel to draw out what Ho identifies as the 'thematic argument for ethnic and cultural segregation'²¹¹ which the novel seems to present. The distended present which

²¹⁰ Although the title bears more than a passing resemblance to *The Remains of the Day*, John McLeod demonstrates that Mo appears to have based Chase upon the real life figure of Gideon Nye, and *The Morning of My Days* upon Nye's *The Morning of My Life in China*. See John McLeod, 'On the Chase for Gideon Nye': History and Representation in Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession*. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Vol. 34, Number 2, 1999, pp.61-74.

²¹¹ Ho, p.71.

emerges in the narrative appears to open up a Bhabhian ‘third space’ but the efforts of Chase and company to enter into a ‘perfected correspondence’ with their Chinese hosts are doomed to failure through Chinese belligerence and cultural incommensurability. Mo’s manipulation of time in the novel frequently draws attention to the moment of the novel’s narration, and to that of its publication. As such, that cultural incommensurability draws attention to the conflicting positions of the United States, China, and Britain in the 1980s, flagging up contemporary concerns regarding the then imminent return of Hong Kong to British sovereignty. It also suggests a rejection of notions of cosmopolitanism and testifies to the enduring power of the nation. Similar concerns occupy Mo’s next novel, *The Redundancy of Courage*, to which I now turn.

The Redundancy of Courage

In the 1994 edition of his book *Distant Voices*, John Pilger draws attention to the then-relatively unknown plight of the tiny nation of East Timor, which had been under Indonesian occupation for nearly two decades:

Other places on the planet may seem more remote; none has been as defiled and abused by murderous forces or as abandoned by the ‘international community’, whose principals are complicit in one of the great, unrecognised crimes of the twentieth century.²¹²

Timothy Mo’s novel *The Redundancy of Courage* is a history of that conflict, although Mo disguises (albeit very thinly) both the location and the principal actors. Like Pilger’s report, Mo’s novel draws attention not only to the details of the conflict but also to the global forces at work behind the scenes. The irony present in the parentheses with which Pilger encloses the ‘international community’ is drawn out in Mo’s novel as the chief protagonist and narrator, Adolph Ng, exposes the self-interest with which the ‘principals’ (each of whom

²¹² John Pilger, *Distant Voices* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.233.

turns out to be a developed, first-world nation) who comprise that international community act. From its small island setting, the novel opens out to explore both the larger global context of that local conflict and the temporal ambiguities which necessarily characterise any attempt to 'write' history. In the case of *Redundancy*, that history is written by the effete outsider Adolph Ng. Whilst much critical attention has been paid to Ng's marginal status and to his unsuitability as the narrative voice of Danu, little has been made of the temporal anachronisms which characterise his narrative. And yet, it is precisely these anachronisms which at once enable and make problematic Ng's account. In particular, the distinction between three distinct points in time – the time of the narrated events, the time of the narrator, and the time of the reader – and the means through which the narrative moves between the three, is central to the manner in which the text operates to enable Ng's narrative, to allow him to place his own identity as well as Danu's history in a global context and, ultimately, to render his account ambiguous and open to interpretation and negotiation.

Much of my analysis of the novels in this thesis so far has been concerned with the ways in which these narratives look forward in time despite their historical contexts. I shall begin my analysis of *Redundancy* by examining the ways in which such a forward-looking point of view is achieved structurally in this novel, through the frequent use of prolepses. This use of prolepses serves to undermine or render ambiguous Ng's narrative of Danu's struggle, whilst drawing attention to the different temporal positions occupied by protagonists, narrator and reader, which I outlined above. More significantly, perhaps, the use of prolepsis is one of the ways in which Ng is able to incorporate the global context into what is

essentially a narrative of local struggle. It is within that local struggle that Ng finds a space in which to explore questions of individual and national identity and agency. Whilst Ng's narrative suggests that he is able to carve out a degree of agency and a secure sense of identity for himself, I shall conclude by suggesting that the lack of temporal fixity which afflicts his narrative – whereby at the end of the novel the reader is unable to pin Ng down to any fixed place or time - renders that agency and identity ambiguous at best.

Forward thinking

The novel's opening paragraph provides a neat illustration of the temporal anachronisms which problematise Ng's narrative:

I don't want them forgotten: Rosa, Osvaldo, Raoul, Maria, Martinho, Arsenhio. It would be easy to say in the glib way of those who can lead uninterrupted lives in placid places that such oblivion would be a fate worse than death. No fate is worse than death.

My first sight on that day, and the strongest picture still, stronger than all the bad things which came later, was of parachutes dropping; drifting as if they were thistledown or broken cotton-pods: silent and smooth [...] the sky suddenly blossoming with a thousand canopies. (It was a reinforced battalion, as I now know.) (2002, p.7)

By considering for just a moment the temporal layers within these opening paragraphs, what appears to be a relatively simple passage quickly becomes something much more complex. The opening line – 'I don't want them forgotten' – foregrounds the memorial impulse which compels Ng to record his narrative. But it also emphasises the distance in time between Ng and the events he is narrating. The statement is, for Ng, proleptic in as much as it looks forward from his point in time to a future point in time when the characters named *might be* forgotten. This corresponds with what Currie terms *rhetorical prolepsis*, that is 'the anticipation of an objection [or in this case a forgetting] and the preclusion of that objection [or forgetting] by incorporating a counter-argument into the discourse.'²¹³ Extending this argument, we might suggest that, given that the whole premise of Ng's narrative is to

²¹³ Currie, *About Time*, p.31.

preclude the forgetting of his friends and the cause for which they died, his narrative can be read as a counter-argument, or counter-narrative, to those official histories that would forget not only the likes of Osvaldo, Martinho and the others, but also Ng himself.

The mention of these other characters highlights another way in which the novel's opening passage foregrounds the temporal ambiguities which characterise Ng's narrative. We as readers have not yet met these characters yet already we know they are to die. In a sense then, the opening line is also proleptic for the reader, anticipating events which lie, for that reader, in the future of the narrative. Yet as Currie points out, '[n]arrative is generally retrospective in the sense that the teller is looking back on events and relating them in the past tense, [although] a reader or listener experiences these events for the first time, as quasi-present.'²¹⁴ Thus although the deaths of these characters are in the future (or proleptic) for the reader, they are in the past (or analeptic) for the narrator. Further highlighting this ambiguity is the fact that the opening paragraph is written in the present tense before switching (for the remainder of the novel) to the past tense, emphasising the split between the 'now' of the narrative and the 'then' of the narrated events. That split is further emphasised by reference to 'all the bad things which came later', a phrase which points to the fact that the future of the novel is already written, and also by the parenthesised addendum at the end of the passage – the knowledge that the parachutists were a 'reinforced battalion' is supplementary to the experience on the day, and is information that could only possibly have been added *after* the event.

²¹⁴ Currie, *About Time*, pp.29-30.

It would be useful, therefore, to pause to examine in more detail the novel's use of prolepsis. On the surface, we might not expect a novel such as *Redundancy* to make much use of this anticipatory mode – after all, we would expect an historical novel to look backwards in time, not forwards. Therefore, where time is concerned we might reasonably assume that analepsis would be the principal anachronistic feature of the novel. And yet Ng's narrative is full of moments of prolepsis, or anticipation. We have already encountered an example of *rhetorical prolepsis* in the shape of the novel's opening line, which anticipates a possible problem somewhere in the future and acts to preclude that problem. Currie identifies two further categories of prolepses which are also helpful to an analysis of the novel, namely *structural prolepsis* and *narratological prolepsis*. Structural prolepsis:

is a form of anticipation which takes place between the time locus of the narrated and the time locus of the narrator. It is, among other things, the relation between narrated time and the time of narration which is inherent in the preterite tense of classical narration.²¹⁵

Structural prolepsis, then, draws attention to the temporal gap between the narrated events and the act of their narration. We have already encountered one such example, that of the 'reinforced battalion' which supplements Ng's memory of the day of the invasion. *Redundancy* is full of further examples of structural prolepses so that, for example, Ng can inform us that the Bronco planes which turn the tide against the resistance movement 'were from the Americans, by the way, and about as good a gift as ever was given.' (p.200) or else can reflect that '[w]e were correct to think that we had no control over our destinies: to consider that resistance was futile and bravery superfluous. From the start, our fate was determined not by ourselves, not locally or by the invader even, but abroad, in Canberra and Washington.' (p.122) Clearly, the knowledge contained within these two examples was not available to Ng at the time the events took place, only at the time of narrating. But as these examples illustrate,

²¹⁵ Currie, *About Time*, p.31.

as well as emphasising the temporal split within the narrative, *structural prolepsis* is one of the principal means through which Ng is able to communicate the global context of the conflict, and to highlight the complicity of the international community in Danu's fate.

Another way in which Ng is able to communicate this global context is through the third of Currie's categories of prolepsis. *Narratological prolepsis* is:

a form of anticipation which takes place within the time locus of the narrated. It is the anticipation of, or flashforward to, future events within the universe of narrated events.²¹⁶

Thus, for example, Ng mentions Mrs Goreng in passing near the start of the novel (p.43) but it is not until the final section of the novel, after a period of several years has passed in the narrative, that her significance becomes apparent to the reader. Even more significant is the mention, in Chapter Eight, of 'Joaquim Lobato, with whom one day I'd share a Kona and blueberry pie.' (p.103) Only in the final chapter does the reader learn the significance of the apparently careless remark. During a stopover in New York en route to his 'new life' in Brazil, Ng does indeed share a coffee with Lobota, FAKOUM's Minister for External Relations who, having been absent from the island during the invasion, has spent the intervening years lobbying the United Nations and fighting a losing battle to make Danu's plight heard internationally. Over that coffee he reveals to Ng that the tacit American support for the *malai* invasion arises in large part from the fact that the only deep-water channel suitable for nuclear submarines for thousands of miles runs past Danu. It is 'very important to their global projection. They didn't want a new left-wing government sitting on the canal bank.' (p.445) This information sheds new light upon the conflict and goes some way towards explaining the silent complicity of the international community or, to be more

²¹⁶ Currie, *About Time*, p.31.

precise, of Western powers. But it also serves to question Ng's reliability as a narrator. Information which was not available to him at the time of the narrated events *is* available to him at the time of narrating, yet he withholds that information from the reader until the closing moments of the novel. Once again, prolepsis is used to highlight the global nature of an apparently local conflict. However, on this occasion Ng employs narratological prolepsis to hint at but ultimately withhold this global context from the reader, adding an element of suspense and drawing attention to the artifice, or at least to the ambiguity, of his account of the invasion.

Nation and time

Ng's history of Danu, then, is both enabled and simultaneously undermined by the temporal gaps which are inherent in his act of retrospective narration. This is significant in that in writing his history, Ng is also writing both his own identity and that of Danu. If his narrative is split and rendered at best ambiguous, then this has clear implications for the questions of identity which the novel clearly intends to address. For Ng, these questions of identity are inextricably bound up with the act of writing. Towards the beginning of the novel he comments that '[w]hen a man writes, you get the core of him.' (p.30) But as he points out, that act of writing is ultimately an act of memory: '[r]emembering is what gives significance; the shape is never there at the time.' (p.330) We have, of course, already encountered a similar sentiment in *An Insular Possession* in the observation that 'there are larger moments, not apprehended at the time but perceived only in retrospect' (*Insular* - p.443). Just as the full story of the founding of Hong Kong can only be recognised retrospectively, so it is that only by supplementing his memories of the conflict between Danu and the *malai* with the knowledge of subsequent events can Ng begin to sketch the intertwining details of his own identity and that of Danu. But this suggests that, like

Ng's history of Danu and Mo's history of Hong Kong, these identities must be split and open to constant negotiation and alteration.

Ng's sense of personal identity, and his position on the margins of Danuese society, is predicated on the stereotype of the 'Chinaman'. The Chinese stereotype is an important element of the novel, one that Ng makes problematic by simultaneously conforming to and rejecting conventional ideas of the Chinese. Bhabha has noted that '[a]n important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness.'²¹⁷ It is precisely this 'fixity' that Ng denies others who seek to represent him and his 'Chinese-ness'. Examples of traditional Chinese stereotypes abound within the pages of *The Redundancy of Courage*, many of them self-applied by Ng in characteristically ironic fashion. Thus he can recognise within his own character 'the Chinese pragmatism' (p.24), he can admit '[w]e Chinese are always accused of being unscrupulous bloodsuckers' (p.56) and he can boast of his hotel that his customers 'paid my audacious Chinese prices without demur'. (p.54) Similarly, his successful business enterprise defines him in familiar, stereotypical terms: 'I had become a Chinese. Up till then I'd had no place in the society of Danu [...] Now I had found an identity, a place in the little society [...] I was a Chinese entrepreneur with capital.' (p.51) Little wonder, then, that when the *malais* invade the island, he initially seeks refuge in the Chinese quarter; 'we gravitate towards our own in a crisis, do we not'.(p.15) In *Redundancy*, then, complex elements that go together to make Adolph Ng's character – his ethnicity, his sexuality, his cosmopolitan upbringing, his wit and irony – are distilled into one comprehensible, fixed and controllable characteristic – his Chinese-ness.

²¹⁷ Bhabha, *Location*, p.66.

Yet Bhabha argues that the stereotype is an ambivalent form of discourse precisely because it cannot be fixed and controlled so that ‘the stereotype, as anxious as it is assertive, is for Bhabha a *process* in which what is taken to be “already known” – and accepted – about the colonized is nevertheless anxiously restated as though it cannot be proved and so must be constantly reinforced by repetition.’²¹⁸ In *Redundancy*, this is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the relationship between Ng and the FAKINTIL Corporal, who addresses Ng as ‘Chinaman’ whenever he refers to him. Even as Ng begins to prove useful to the guerrillas, and becomes entrusted with certain defined roles within that organisation, the Corporal seems unable to see him in any way other than through the stereotype of his being Chinese. Again drawing upon Bhabha, we might read the Corporal’s attitude towards Ng ‘not [as] a simple rejection of difference but a recognition and a disavowal of an otherness that [both] holds an attraction and poses a threat.’²¹⁹ As such, the ambivalence of Ng’s Chinese stereotype becomes a form of resistance in itself.

The stereotyping of Ng as ‘Chinese’ is further complicated and apparently undermined by his simultaneous and somewhat contradictory status as the island’s resident ‘man of the world’. This rather ironically applied label is earned by virtue of the different educational path he took from his *mestizo* friends; ‘[s]ome of the *mestizos* might get sent to the Home Country [but] the affluent Chinese preferred something more cosmopolitan for their junior generation.’ (p.25) Thus Ng’s education in North America only serves to further differentiate him from the society to which he returns, whilst also emphasising his cosmopolitanism. As Ho argues, ‘the *mestizo* passage outwards to Portugal does not take them far from Danu; it only serves to

²¹⁸ Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1997), p.128.

²¹⁹ Childs and Williams, p.125.

confirm them as anti-colonialists [so that] Ng's [...] educational trajectory [...] compounds his alienation.'²²⁰ Ng's status as 'citizen of the world' therefore simultaneously problematises the pigeonholing of him as 'Chinese' and emphasises his 'otherness', his difference. Thus the guerrilla leaders can acknowledge and praise Ng's worldliness when flattery calls for it, yet the tacit understanding remains that 'of course it was impossible for a Chinese to represent FAKOUM, even if he wanted to. Danu for the Danuese.' (p.90)

As a perpetual outsider, be it in colonial Danu, under *malai* occupation, or even within the guerrilla group resisting that occupation, Ng is forced to discover the means of self-preservation. His survival rests on his ability to adapt to whichever situation he finds himself in, he is someone 'who need to adjust in order to survive [and whose] individual identity transcends the various adjustments it has to make.'²²¹ Ng is in many ways the classic mimic man. Bart Moore-Gilbert insists that 'mimicry must be approached from the point of view not just of the subject who is mimicked (the colonizer), but also of the subject who mimics (the colonized); in this latter sense mimicry can be described as a defence "exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare".'²²² In *The Redundancy of Courage*, Ng actively employs this 'defence' to facilitate his own survival. Thus he reports of the aftermath of the *malai* invasion 'I tried to wrap myself around the situation, think myself into the *malai* mentality. For me, safety lay in camouflage and integration.' (p.113) Later, as an unwitting and unwilling member of the guerrilla group, he welcomes a minor injury; 'it would do no harm, no harm at all, for my comrades to see the Chinaman

²²⁰ Ho, p.98.

²²¹ Rajiva Wijesinha, 'Timothy Mo's *The Redundancy of Courage*: An Outsider's View of Identity', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 28.2 (1993), p.29.

²²² Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), p.131.

bleeding for the Cause.’ (p.190) The ironic tone makes clear that ‘the Cause’ is not one he necessarily shares wholeheartedly, whilst the self-reference to the ‘Chinaman’ stereotype underlines the outsider status it confers upon him. But equally, he recognises that self-preservation lies in camouflage, in a mimicry that makes him appear less different, less ‘other’.

Ng’s ability to mimic those in power and to camouflage himself within that world is again in evidence when he is captured and finds himself a servant to Colonel Goreng and his wife, the latter of whom he addresses, at his own insistence, by ‘the native title of respect’ (p.316), again displaying his chameleon-like ability to adapt to any situation. Mrs Goreng is a former journalist who revels in regularly showing Ng her published articles, ‘each time as if it was the first. Knowing who was servant and who mistress, I entered into the spirit of the farce.’ (p.316) This episode, where both parties play a part of which the other is aware, is a prelude to the more serious moment in which Ng negotiates his freedom from Colonel Goreng. Again, both parties are tacitly aware of what the other is proposing as Ng bribes the Colonel, the implication being all the time that the Colonel is merely acting as a mediator between Ng and those authorised to make such a decision. One feature of mimicry is that ‘the authoritative discourse becomes displaced as the colonizer sees traces of *himself* in the colonized’,²²³ and the same is true of this episode. The absolute power wielded by Colonel Goreng slips as he is confronted by a version of himself, disturbing and menacing his self-identity and allowing Ng to wield a degree of agency upon the situation.

²²³ Childs and Williams, p.130.

In writing his history, then, Ng appears also to write himself, to lay claim to his own identity within Danu. But as we have already observed, his narrative is split between the time of writing and the time of the events narrated. This distinction between narrated time and the time of narration recalls not only Bhabha's notion of the time-lag as explored in the previous section in my analysis of *An Insular Possession* but also the distinction made by Émile Benveniste between the statement, or *énoncé*, and the act of making that statement, or *enunciation*. Language is irretrievably divided and, since subjectivity is formed out of language, it follows that the human subject is also irrevocably split. Thus the identity that Ng's enunciation lays claim to is instantly retrospective, leaving only the trace of that identity in the residual statement. This is identified in *Redundancy* by what Kana Oyabu describes as the 'discrepancy between the narrator and the narrated self'²²⁴ so that "the main character Ng" [is] described by "the narrator Ng".²²⁵ The agency and sense of identity which Ng's narrative lays claim to is split asunder by a kind of double-temporal space: that identified earlier between the act of narration and the events narrated, and signposted in particular by Ng's reliance on prolepsis to add information or context to the narrative, and that identified by Benveniste between the act of narration (or *énoncé*) and the statement (or *enunciation*) which is left behind. As such, the gap between the narrated events and the act of their narration recalls the similar gap between primary and secondary narratives in Ishiguro's novels, and serves to similarly problematise the history which is being narrated.

But if Ng's own claim upon identity is troubled by the temporal ambiguities inherent in the text, his narrative also problematises the construct of Danuese national identity.

²²⁴ Kana Oyabu, 'Cross-Cultural Fiction: The Novels of Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1995), p.133.

²²⁵ Oyabu, p.133.

In the act of writing the nation of Danu, Ng draws attention to the split between the performative and the pedagogical. Yet although his narrative clearly belongs to the former, haunting the pedagogical construct of Danuese national identity formed by the *mestizo* independence movement, Ng's account draws attention to the fact that the two always necessarily go together so that 'the polarity of the pedagogical and performative is constantly blurring, so that the pedagogical is never as stable as it wants to be, and the performative itself becomes pedagogically important.'²²⁶

It is towards the pedagogical that the FAKOUM party turn as they attempt to mobilise support and unite the country behind their drive for independence. We learn little of *Danu* before it became a Portuguese colony; there is no tradition to fall back upon. As such, FAKOUM have no choice but to invent a past. Eric Hobsbawm identifies invented tradition as 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past'²²⁷. These invented traditions tend to be presented in three fundamental ways: 'the national anthem, the national flag, [and] the personification of "the nation" in symbol or image'.²²⁸ So it is with Danu. At the first Independence Party meeting, the FAKOUM leader, Osvaldo, 'allude[s] to The Mountain, although he didn't use its name (it was kind of taboo), invoking everything that sacred place meant to the country people' (p.74). The group elect as their figurehead President the aunt of one of the revolutionaries, 'a betel-chewing mountain woman from the family's ancestral village near the sacred mountain' (p.78), and compose a new national anthem, 'a darn

²²⁶ David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.109.

²²⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.1.

²²⁸ Hobsbawm, p.7.

good, catchy tune: “O, Mighty Mountain” (p.97). The entire, invented tradition draws upon the countryside, upon ancestral villages and timeless traditions (recalling the particular vision of England which Stevens associates with in *Remains*) and upon a mountain whose sacred legend falls back into the mists of time. Attaching a symbolic importance to this mountain suggests a similarly nebulous but ancient origin for the nation of *Danu* itself. The whole invented package comes together in the hastily arranged independence ceremony. The stage is adorned with the Danuese flag which, despite Ng’s earlier observation that ‘[t]here’s a law: the more tinpot the banana republic the more flamboyant the flag: eagles grasping cobras, that kind of thing’ (p.80) turns out to be ‘a remarkably restrained composition by a mountain textile weaver’ (p.108), the timeless craftsmanship of the weaver providing another subtle suggestion of continuity with the past. The ceremony, meanwhile, is rounded off with several rousing renditions of the new national anthem, during which Ng observes a grenade rolling off the table but decides ‘it was better to be blown up than interrupt “O, Mighty Mountain”’ (p.108). Already, this invented anthem commands a respect and authority that belies its recent composition. And what is key is that the singing of the anthem, and the ceremony in general, does indeed bring together a ‘deep and horizontal comradeship’: ‘there were middle-class people from the town, beggar-kids, montagnards, soldiers, children in school uniform and Carmichael [a foreign reporter] crying her eyes out’ (p.109). They are all brought together under a national identity – the flag, the anthem, the mountain as national symbol – only recently constructed but which already seems to reach back into a past in which *Danu*’s origins are located but forever lost. Yet the very participation of Adolph – ethnic Chinese, homosexual, city-dweller – in these rituals which invoke all the rugged tradition of the mountains,

undermines the sense of a homogeneous ‘people’ and opens up the possibility of alternative narratives of *Danu*.

One way in which the performativity of Ng’s history challenges the pedagogical construct of Danu is in the cynical tone of the narrative voice. Indeed, the irreverent, ironic and sometimes downright sarcastic tone is one of the major objections that some commentators have raised towards the authority of Ng’s narrative. And yet to dismiss the important question of voice in this manner is to ignore the fact that such a tone appears perfectly pitched towards pricking the pedagogical purpose of events such as the independence ceremony. Ng’s alternative, marginal voice repeatedly haunts the authoritative voice of Danuese nationhood, undermining that authority even at its moment of inception. Furthermore, to focus solely on the problematic aspects of Ng’s narrative voice is to fail to acknowledge the moments of great warmth and sympathy which also characterise his narrative. For all that he can see through the fabrications of the anthem, the flag, and the mountain, Ng can also acknowledge the necessity of the act: ‘they had to make a formal declaration of autonomy, proclaim sovereignty purely so that the invading *malais* could be seen to have violated it’ (p.107). And when he says of the independence ceremony itself ‘considering the...motive for the ceremony, considering the in-born Danuese talent for making a shambles of anything, for manic disorganisation, it turned out to be not only a moving but also a disciplined spectacle’ (p.107) he seems to capture perfectly that combination of resistance and empathy, that combination of the performative challenge to the pedagogical and the acknowledgement of the rational need *for* that pedagogical construct in that present situation.

Nevertheless, Ng's narrative undermines the notion of a homogeneous history for Danu. And even his recognition of the rationale behind the assertion of such a history points to a deeper, more general problem with the construction of the Danuese national identity. Partha Chatterjee observes that 'the national question [in the non-European world] is, of course, historically fused with a colonial question. The assertion of national identity was, therefore, a struggle against colonial exploitation'²²⁹. Indeed, in *Danu's* case this effect is doubled. On the one hand the nationalist movement springs out of opposition to the colonial presence of 'the home country'. But, on the other, it is born of the impending threat from the *malais* across the border. Danuese nationality is established in the interstitial space (more commonly the territory of the anti-nationalist or the performative), in the brief moment in time *between* empires. However, as Ernest Gellner points out, the construction of a national identity as a form of struggle against colonialism is not to everyone's benefit, since 'it insists on imposing homogeneity on the populations unfortunate enough to fall under the sway of authorities possessed by the nationalist ideology'²³⁰. In the case of *Danu*, Adolph and his fellow ethnic Chinese are the big losers; 'They – we – had been the ones who'd had the most to lose by Independence. Most Chinese didn't give a damn about politics [but] the natives, and that included the *mestizo* leaders, half-castes like Remedios and his friends, were determined to get their pound of flesh from us' (p.11). The fact that the independence leaders themselves are not pure Danuese but rather *mestizos*, 'half-castes', gives added fragility to *their* construct of *Danu*, where *they* are the true Danuese, where *they* decide who 'belongs'.

²²⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed, 1993), p.18.

²³⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p.45.

The ideal of the national identity as a tool of resistance against colonial occupation is thus significantly undermined as the new nation's imposed homogeneity cracks open to reveal a society as marginal and as exclusive as the colonial regime it replaced. Indeed, what emerges is a degree of complicity with that colonial regime, a complicity underlined when we consider the new nation's physical borders. Anderson observes an 'isomorphism between each nationalism's territorial stretch and that of the previous imperial administrative unit'²³¹. In other words, the new nation defines its territorial limits not according to some ancient notion of territorial kinship but rather according to the map drawn by the very colonists they seek to overthrow. Thus the island which the Danuese share with their *malai* neighbours is divided by 'one of those quaint inheritances of empire: sweating teams of rival, compass- and theodolite-armed white men trying to post-rationalise the impromptu annexations of junior officers and the bargains struck around the mahogany conference tables of Europe' (p.36). When Mrs Goreng, the *malai* Colonel's wife, briefs the foreign press she turns this point to the advantage of *malai* propaganda; 'she told some lies about the close relations between the old *malai* half of the island and ours which had, she said, made them indistinguishable for all practical purposes: [...] it was not an invasion but a reunion' (p.376). Mrs Goreng thus turns the tables, depicting the *malai* as liberators, freeing *Danu* from colonial subjugation and re-uniting the two halves of the island according to what she claims to be the true origins of the country. Her account of the past is false, but it is no more constructed than the FAKOUM version, which imposes the same homogeneity upon the citizens within *Danu*'s borders as did the colonising nation who created these borders.

²³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p.114.

But the nation can be complicit with its colonial forebear in another way. As Anderson observes, ‘the intelligentsias were central to the rise of nationalism in the colonial territories’²³². This intelligentsia was invariably educated in the colonial centre, indoctrinated into the philosophy and culture of their occupiers and prepared for a life of service to that colony. So it is with *Danu*, where ‘the *mestizo* passage outwards [to Portugal] has a definite ideological and political orientation’²³³. Frantz Fanon was amongst the first to identify the problems inherent in this phenomenon:

In an under-developed country an authentic middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people’s disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways – shocking because anti-nationalist – of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois²³⁴.

In *Redundancy* it is this Portuguese-educated middle class who in turn seek to rule over independent *Danu*. A similar demarcation is made within the resistance forces of FAKINTIL, where the veterans who served in Africa for the Home Country form the ruling body and where those others recruited from civilian life are viewed with suspicion and distrust. But in discriminating between different members of society, by having, for example, ‘an unofficial Chinese exclusion policy’ (p.86), they prove themselves to be little different from their colonial predecessor in ruling over a fractured and undemocratic society.

What Fanon appears to be warning against is the threat of neo-colonialism. But in the case of *Redundancy*, his model can be taken a stage further. As Adolph himself admits, there are similarities in the experiences of the Danuese and their *malais*

²³² Anderson, p.116.

²³³ Ho, p.98.

²³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp.120-121.

occupiers; ‘our *malais*, our scourge, had been colonised by a crew of flaxen-headed burghers and herring fishermen from the North and ourselves by a gang of swarthy wine-growers and olive producers from the very south of Europe’ (p.37). Like the Danuese, the *malais* themselves were once a colonised people. When the Danuese look at the *malais*, they see themselves staring back, rather in the fashion of a reversal of Bhabha’s formulation of mimicry whereby ‘the look of surveillance returns as the disciplining gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and “partial” representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence’²³⁵. But what the Danuese see is an occupying force. As Ho puts it, ‘in *malai* aggression against Danu, the imperialistic will of the new nation-state represents the betrayal of nationalism as liberationist ideology’²³⁶. Thus for the Danuese, even in the act of fighting the *malais*, in defending their country against them, their claim for nationalism as a form of defence and opposition to imperialism is fatally undermined by the evidence facing them.

The recognition of the *malais*’ past as a subjugated nation points towards a wider historical awareness which permeates Ng’s narrative and which broadens the novel’s reach beyond the narrow spatio-temporal conflict between the *malais* and the Danuese. Thus, for example, when Ng comments during the invasion that ‘I think we thought we were being invaded for a second time by the Japanese’ (p.17) it is merely the first of many points at which the *malai* invasion is written on top of an earlier moment of Danuese subjugation at the hands of a different Asian neighbour. Similarly, when exiled in the Home Country, en route to Brazil, Ng observes:

the monument on the river bank to the Renaissance explorers and circumnavigators who’d set the tiny country on the path to greatness. I imagined they must have been bold generals like

²³⁵ Bhabha, *Location*, p.89.

²³⁶ Ho, p.90.

Arsenio and Osvaldo, pathfinders like X. Ray, stalwarts like the Corporal, boys as eager and facile as my woodchucks. For them, the time and place had been right. The Vascos and Fernandos had been no greater than Osvaldo. (p.441)

This sense of history which informs Ng's narrative is another means by which the conflict between Danu and the *malai*, or between East Timor and Indonesia, is taken beyond its local time and place and afforded a larger metaphoric meaning. For McLeod, the very nature of many of these references further undermines Ng's account: 'his narrative is faced with the task of communicating the reality he claims in terms that make sense to a Western audience, because power is perceived ultimately to reside with them. Ng's narrative...is specifically addressed to an English-speaking audience'²³⁷, a point acknowledged by Ng when he refers, for example, to 'that great American television audience who comprise the Circus of our day: thumbs up or thumbs down.' (p.123) Thus when Ng reflects upon his 'lost years' as a guerrilla, we can date his period of exile relatively precisely by reference to his unawareness of the deaths in 1977 of both Elvis Presley and Charlie Chaplin, and to his surprise 'that a geriatric cowboy had become President of the mightiest nation on earth'²³⁸ (p.351). The fact that he must narrate the history of Danu not in his own tongue but in another language adds a further layer of ambiguity to his history, highlighted by the fact that he frequently has to resort to 'translat[ing] in this clumsy fashion and to the best of my limited ability' (p.348) words, titles or phrases which have no direct equivalent in the English tongue.

Lost in time

The greatest ambiguity in Ng's narrative, however, lies in that temporal space which I have referred to throughout my analysis of *Redundancy*. The novel ends with Ng in

²³⁷ John McLeod, *Re-Writing History*, p.115.

²³⁸ Both Chaplin and Presley died in 1977. Ronald Reagan became the 40th President of the United States of America in 1981. Ng also refers to the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 -1981. Since Ng refers to his time with the rebels as 'four years taken out of my life' (p.350) we can assume that his period of 'exile' spans the years 1977-1981.

Brazil, attempting to 'create' a new identity for himself as Mr Kawasaki (the pseudonym inspired by the beloved motorcycle he owned prior to the *malai* invasion).

However, he discovers that his arrival in Brazil:

[w]as neither an end, nor a beginning. If I thought I could unmake my old self so easily I was a fool. I could not terminate Adolph Ng so conveniently. I was trying to accomplish within my own small person what the *malais* hadn't been able to do to a nation. An identity and a history cannot be obliterated with a switch of name or the stroke of a pen. I arrived in the vastness of a new country as what I thought a *tabula rasa* but there was writing underneath, the coded determinants of what I was and always would be inscribed in (what shall we say?) acetic acid or lemon juice which gradually browned and showed in the revealing action of sunlight. (p.447)

But the inscriptions of Ng's identity which show through on the Brazilian palimpsest are faint traces. As Oyabu observes, for Ng the very act of writing is a relinquishment of identity: 'writing makes Ng vulnerable, because he loses his secure and ambiguous camouflage of a Chinaman.'²³⁹ It is perhaps for this reason that Ng is absent even from the place of narration. Whilst it is easy to misread the novel's ending and to assume that *Redundancy* is narrated from the relative safety of Brazil, the use of the past tense in Ng's comment that 'I never had any problems with Brazil all the time I was there' (p.442) locates the narrative moment elsewhere. Similarly, when he comments of Europe 'Yes, I'd come back' (p.442), the use of the present tense 'come' (rather than 'go') seems to suggest that he produces the narrative having returned to the old imperial centre. That, however, is as precise as we may be. As Oyabu notes, 'Ng is "beyond" the text [and] the text's existence is ensured by the narrator's absence.'²⁴⁰ Thus the history he tells, and the identity he writes for both himself and for Danu are simultaneously enabled and undermined by the temporal space between the narrator and the events he narrates, and also by the fact that that narrative moment is in a sense unfixed, located at some unspecified point in time and space beyond the end of the narrated world. That is, Ng is only able to narrate these

²³⁹ Oyabu, p.148.

²⁴⁰ Oyabu, p.154.

events, to claim a voice, once he finds himself removed from the events by a distance which is spatial but also, crucially, temporal but – equally crucially – the precise distance and time remains unidentifiable.

The lack of fixity in the time locus of the narrator is paralleled by one further time locus, that of the reader. Whilst the time locus of the narrative can be fixed relatively accurately within a specific time period, and whilst – despite the lack of fixity – we know that there can be only one moment of narration, the time locus of the reader is far less easy to fix, not least since different readers will approach the text at different times. A contemporary reading of the novel will differ markedly from the way in which the novel might have been read upon publication simply because a twenty first century reader is likely to be aware of the way in which the history of the conflict has progressed since the novel was published. Timor-Leste, as East Timor is now known, gained its independence from Indonesia in May 2002. Since then, the country has been blighted by internal conflicts, the most recent of which in 2008 saw a failed assassination attempt on President José Ramos Horta, the real life counterpart to Joaquim Lobato, with whom Ng shares a coffee in New York. But the effect of this variable temporal gap between the time locus of narration and the time locus of the reader is doubled – not only does the reader bring new knowledge to the text, the text also brings new shape to the reader's understanding of the conflict. This time locus of the reader corresponds, I would suggest, to Paul Ricoeur's notion of mimesis³ which 'provid[es] a space for a confrontation between the world of the text and the world of the reader.'²⁴¹ For Ricoeur, mimesis³, or *refiguration*, is concerned with the way in which the narrative alters the reader's understanding or perception of the world. It is

²⁴¹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative: Volume 2*, p.5.

this final category of mimesis which corresponds to the time locus of the reader and which opens up a potentially interesting space of (re)interpretation and negotiation in *Redundancy* and – more broadly – in each of the novels considered in this novel.

Conclusion

Disjunctive temporalities simultaneously enable and haunt the histories that are narrated in *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage*. Both the unnamed narrator in *An Insular Possession* and Ng in *Redundancy* serve to displace the homogeneous quality of traditional historical accounts of nationhood and to highlight, instead, what Bhabha identifies as the double-time of nation. Each exposes the tension between the pedagogical and the performative and brings to the fore the conflict between national identity and the outside influences of the global or transnational which in turn give these narratives a contemporary relevance. In *An Insular Possession*, Mo explores the origins of nationhood through the story of the founding of Hong Kong as a British possession. But the voices of the marginal protagonists, most notably the Americans Walter Eastman and Gideon Chase, and their newspaper, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, serve to problematise the pedagogical construct of nationhood, represented most notably by the *River Bee's* rival the *Canton Monitor*, and to draw attention to other, marginal versions of that history. Ng's account of the conflict over Danu meanwhile contrasts the manufactured tradition, the anthem, the mountain as symbol of national identity and history with the spectral excesses of sexuality and race exposed by Ng's first person narrative, so that notions of Danuese nationhood and community are transformed and imagined in new ways. Yet both novels also suggest that, whilst the performative is often privileged over the pedagogical in contemporary criticism, the latter cannot be dismissed out of hand. At the end of *Insular* it is the voice of the *Monitor* which prevails and

correspondingly, although the novel's protagonists cannot know it at the time, the founding of Hong Kong as a British possession will prove to be one of the British Empire's most astute and lucrative acquisitions. And as Ng's narrative in *Redundancy* makes clear, Danuese national independence grows out of opposition to imperial occupation (both past and future), the novel's more sympathetic characters both living and dying for that pedagogical notion of independent nationhood. As Ng prophesies in the novel's final lines, the future independence of Danu/East Timor will be inspired at least in part by a similar notion of violated nationhood. In their (at least partial) defence of the resilience of nation, and in their acknowledgement of the cultural incommensurability of different cultures, nations and races, both novels warn against the complacent celebration of cosmopolitan contact and exchange. The nation, we are reminded, maintains a strong hold on both the imagination and the identity of the people who fall within its borders.

Yet even in the act of narrating the alternative histories of Hong Kong and Danu, these accounts are displaced by the temporal ambiguities intrinsic in the narratives. In *Insular*, the time-lag or distended present creates a space of potential negotiation between the competing nations. But that space emerges as a zone of frustrated cross-cultural contact as the performative acts of translation and interpretation reveal Gideon's chase for a 'perfected correspondence' to be a doomed one. The changing experience of time that the protagonists encounter, particularly through advancements in technology and travel, give the novel a contemporary relevance and suggest that the frustrated cross-cultural contact may be as relevant to the time of the novel's production as it is to the time being narrated. In *Redundancy*, Ng discovers that the split inherent in the very act of recording his history, that between the act of

enunciation and the statement left behind draws attention to the space that opens up between the time of narration and the that of the reader, and weakens any claim to agency on the part of Ng by stressing the fact that moments of subjectivity are fleeting. In *Redundancy* we identify a discrepancy between the narrator and the narrated-self, a discrepancy underscored by the fact that whilst the latter appears to be rooted in some kind of historical past, the former is located somewhere ‘beyond’ the text, the lack of fixity of the narrative moment highlighting the fragility of the narrative. Meanwhile, the gap between the narrated events and the narrating moment further problematises the authority of both narratives by highlighting the partiality of the accounts. In particular, the frequent reliance upon prolepsis serves to emphasise the fact that these versions of events are repeatedly supplemented by knowledge that could not have been available at the time the events which are described took place. The question of access to supplementary knowledge also raises a final temporal ambiguity in both histories, that located between the time locus of the narrated events and the time locus of the reader. Reading the novels some two decades after their publication, the reader is inevitably armed with knowledge that the author could not have had access to at the time. In short, the novels have endings but the real life events upon which the novels are based go on. As such, the histories of East Timor and Hong Kong which are presented in *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage* respectively are also histories of the present day, commenting on the cosmopolitan moment at the end of the twentieth century and given new shape and meaning by the events of the first decade of the twenty first century.

Chapter 4

Cosmopolitan Time: *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* and *Renegade or Halo*²

Introduction

Timothy Mo's two most recent novels, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*²⁴² and *Renegade or Halo*²⁴³, are marked by something of a departure from his previous novels in that they largely eschew the backward historical glance of *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage*, closing the temporal gap between the narrated events and the time of their narration. As a result, they confront the contemporary moment of cosmopolitanism and globalisation at the end of the twentieth century much more directly than any of the other novels considered in this thesis. That moment touches these novels not only in their subject matter but also in the circumstances in which they were published. After a well-publicised and acrimonious split with his publishers, Random House, and having failed to attract what he considered to be a suitable advance for *Brownout* on the open market, Mo set up his own imprint, Paddleless Press, and took what many considered a backward step for an established author by self-publishing both *Brownout* and the subsequent *Renegade or Halo*². Whether Mo was baulking at the worst excesses of the publishing industry or attempting (and failing) to exploit it for maximum gain remains a matter of some debate. For some, his actions were to be celebrated as a heroic act of agency and resistance, the self-publication of *Brownout* 'throw[ing] down the gauntlet to its enemy, the multinational publishing houses which dominate the market'²⁴⁴. For others, Mo was motivated by greed, reportedly turning down a six figure advance for *Brownout* in the mistaken belief that he could attract a greater fee if the book went to

²⁴² Timothy Mo, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* (London: Paddleless Press, 1995). **All further page references refer to this edition.**

²⁴³ Timothy Mo, *Renegade or Halo*² (London: Paddleless Press, 2000). **All further page references refer to this edition.**

²⁴⁴ Ho, p.109.

auction. Mo himself was in no doubt, painting himself as a renegade outsider pitted against the might of the global publishing industry. In positioning himself as the outsider, Mo takes a very different stance to that of Ishiguro, who has spoken at length about the need to accept the demands of the multinational publishing industry and of the fact that he always writes with the knowledge that his books will be translated into many languages in mind²⁴⁵. Ishiguro's acceptance of the nature of the industry seems to contrast with Mo's own apparent discomfort, a position which is reflected perhaps in an episode in *Renegade* in which a book store owner in Hong Kong describes to Castro the visit of an author for whom the two men share a passion: "He was in here two years ago to do a signing. We sold two copies, I'm sorry to say. When he arrived he told me he hated doing this kind of thing too" (p.198). There seems to be a self-reflexivity about this line which suggests both a weariness on the part of Mo as regards the rigours of promoting his work in the global marketplace and a tacit acknowledgement, in the reference to low sales, of the risk he was taking in self-publishing, and therefore self-promoting, his work.

Whether we choose to view Mo as hero or victim what cannot be in doubt is that both *Brownout* and *Renegade*, perhaps in part at least because of the author's travails, engage directly with the late Twentieth Century moment of cosmopolitanism and globalisation in a way which neither his own previous works, nor those of Ishiguro, do. As such, his choice of the Philippines as setting for both novels could hardly have been more appropriate. With its colonial past – '[t]hree hundred years in a Spanish convent and fifty in Hollywood' (*Renegade* p.16) – and its troubled post-war independence, the nation stands in many ways as the archetypical cosmopolitan site at

²⁴⁵ See, for example, Cynthia F. Wong and Grace Crummett, 'A Conversation about Life and Art with Kazuo Ishiguro' in Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F. Wong (eds), *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), pp.204 – 220.

the end of the twentieth century, a complex mix of identities and influences, of privilege and poverty, of inward tourism and investment and of outward migration and exile. But as both novels illustrate, the narrative of Filipino nationhood is inextricably intertwined with the larger story of globalisation. In *Brownout* and *Renegade*, Mo's long standing exploration of the relationships between the local and the cosmopolitan, between nation and the transnational, between home and the world, reaches its peak. And, as has been the case in his earlier work, he finds that relationship to be a deeply troubled one.

In my introduction to this thesis I referred to Fredric Jameson's notion that the modern era is 'dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time'²⁴⁶. Much of my purpose in the intervening analysis has been to restore these 'categories of time' to their place alongside spatial considerations. I use the word 'alongside' deliberately because, as my analysis of these two final novels will suggest, the two are largely inseparable. As such, my analysis of *Brownout* and *Renegade* shall be concerned as much by the spatial as they are by the temporal, the latter of which is nevertheless ultimately always present. I shall begin with *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*, examining the apparent dichotomy within the novel between the local and the international. I shall suggest that whilst the novel's structure – whereby the first section is concerned with notions of Filipino national identity and the second with the ways in which the outside world challenges and undermines such notions – supports that dichotomy, the two are in fact far less discrete. I shall also examine the strange temporality of the novel's Epilogue, which stretches not only beyond the time locus of the events narrated but also the time locus of the reader, suggesting that this feature

²⁴⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.16.

too contributes to the novel's exploration of the cosmopolitan experience at the end of the twentieth century. That experience is also the concern of *Renegade or Halo*². However, whereas *Brownout* is concerned with what happens when the cosmopolitan world impinges upon the local, *Renegade* explores the fortunes of the individual cast out into the world at large. I will explore that exile, with particular reference to questions of identity, agency and the ethical considerations of the global economy at the end of the century. In each novel, I shall trace the emerging conflicts and tensions that go with the process of cosmopolitan exchange, identifying in the process some of Ishiguro's 'seeds of things that didn't go so well'.

Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard

For the majority of critics, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* provided evidence that Mo's gamble in turning to self-publishing had failed to pay off. In particular they identified in the novel's loose and uneven structure a lack of editorial care and attention. It is perhaps inevitable that in the aftermath of his break from the publishing industry every possible weakness or anomaly in *Brownout* was likely to be magnified and held as evidence of the author's folly. In my analysis of the novel I want to offer an alternative reading, one which links the novel's loose structure and unfixed focalisation to the times and to the events which it represents. I shall begin by briefly examining the controversy surrounding *Brownout's* scatological Prologue, suggesting that the numerous readings of this Prologue as Mo's inflammatory and defiant reaction to the publishing industry which rejected him fail to see its relevance both in terms of introducing (and prejudicing the reader against) an important character in the later part of the novel and, more importantly, in relation to the novel's larger exposition of the sex trade as one of the excesses of global tourism. That exposition takes place in the novel's main narrative which is divided into two distinct parts.

Elaine Ho has suggested that these two main sections – which appear to bear little relationship to each other – can be read as ‘a dialogue of antithetical terms: local versus foreign, quotidian reality versus the rarefied environment of an [international] academic conference’²⁴⁷. Taking up this challenge, I read the two sections as exploring the dichotomy between national identity and cosmopolitanism. However, I shall suggest that even as Mo attempts to piece together the national identity of the Philippines through his portrait of numerous Filipino characters in Part One, the global nevertheless intrudes in, for example, Victoria Init’s attempts to carve out a place in the world and, in particular, to attract tourism and investment of a rather more legitimate sort than the sex tourism that permeates this section of the novel. Init’s plans come to fruition in the grand international academic conference which occupies the second part of the novel. It is in this section that Mo’s satirical eye turns upon the artifice of such transnational gatherings. I shall examine the ways in which the carefully stage-managed event begins to fall apart as well as drawing attention to the ways in which the local characters, so prominent in the first part of the novel, are marginalised in the second. Finally, I shall examine the peculiar temporality of the Epilogue which – set several years into the future not only of the narrative but also of the author and the contemporary reader – invites a reassessment of the events narrated in the main sections of the novel.

Prologue and Part 1

The majority of criticism and controversy regarding *Brownout* has surrounded the novel’s Prologue. For Mo’s critics, it is a provocative and deliberately shocking act on the part of the author, one last gesture to the publishing industry which has, as he sees it, rejected him. Indeed, Mo himself gleefully describes the chapter – a particularly

²⁴⁷ Ho, p.115.

detailed and lengthy description of a coprophilic sexual exchange between a Filipina prostitute and a German tourist, Professor Detlef Pfeidwengeler – as ‘the filthiest opening chapter of any book ever published’²⁴⁸ and it is not difficult to see the name he gave his own publishing imprint, Paddleless Press, as humorously linked to the content of that opening chapter. Nevertheless, claims that the Prologue ‘seemed to condemn [Mo’s] literary career to the toilet’²⁴⁹, whilst predictable, are wide of the mark and fail to acknowledge the role that the Prologue plays in relation to the rest of the novel. For one thing, Pfeidwengeler will become a key protagonist in the second part of *Brownout* and his appearance in the Prologue serves to introduce and prejudice the reader towards a character whose views will be amongst the most contentious in the novel. Further, the event foreshadows the sex tourism, and the sex trade in general, which is never far from the surface of the narrative. Indeed it is that sex trade, which is often linked to organised and violent crime, which allows the novel to explore the darker edges of both Filipino society and the global economy.

It is that global industry which Victoria Init, wife of the local congressman, wishes to tap into in the first section of *Brownout*. In particular, she seeks to exploit the opportunities that lie in the global business of travel: ‘The quick bucks lay in tourism. Any fool...knew it. The baggage porters, the taxi-drivers, the pumpboat-operators, the pimps in the Plaza, they could all have told you that.’ (p.34) The brief list illustrates the interconnectivity of the economy, the ways in which the local can benefit from tapping into this global industry, but the presence of the pimps on the list draws attention back to the novel’s Prologue and hints at the seamier side of

²⁴⁸ John Mullin, ‘Timothy Mo Sets Up Shop As His Own Publisher’, *Guardian*, 25 February 1995, page number unknown.

²⁴⁹ Tim Adams, ‘Sex disappears from the British novel as authors run scared of ridicule’, *Observer*, (1 August 2010) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/aug/01/sex-british-novel-chatterley>> [accessed 30 August 2010].

cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, this is the way in which the provincial (and fictional) Gobernador de Leon can make a splash in the wider world. In part, Init's goal is to reverse the flow of goods and people out of the country: '[The Philippines] exported people – domestic servants to Kuwait, prostitutes to Japan and Lagos, nurses to Dubai, tailors to Jeddah, construction workers to Iraq' (p.16). The litany of unchosen reasons for travel, which foreshadow the odyssey which Rey Castro shall undertake in *Renegade or Halo*², highlights many of the negative causes of the mobility which is such a feature of the cosmopolitan world and explains why, despite the novel's engagement with the modern face of Asia, certain peoples within its pages may still be referred to as 'the lineal descendants of the galley-rowers of the Barbary Corsairs, the Christian slaves of the Arab world, cheated and abused by employers who lived in another historical era and inhabited a different moral universe' (p.16). There is a sense, in this description, of the unevenness which haunts the modern cosmopolitan world, an unevenness which has its roots in a past whose inequities remain unresolved. Yet allusions to piracy, to religious intolerance and to abusive employers and exploited workers ring true also of the world beyond the time of the narrative, suggesting something of the potential for larger divisions and conflicts which will arise out of the time of the narrated events.

Not that forced exile is the experience of travel for all of Filipino society. Victoria Init, as a member of the country's political elite, enjoys more comfortable forms of mobility than her less privileged countrymen and women, so that for example 'She was no hick. She'd seen the Louvre; she'd stayed at the Gritti Palace...; she'd heard a public lecture at the British Museum' (p.35). But this Grand Tour of Europe is not all

it seems. Part of the political elite in their own country, the Inits find themselves endowed with rather less agency and influence outwith their own borders:

The Inits kept a low profile abroad. Mrs Init had been mistaken for a mail-order bride in Germany, the Congressman for a chauffeur in Paris...In the face of ignorance and insolence, they'd exhibited the patience, the tolerance, the cheerfulness, the mildness of the poorer of their countrymen...Correct behaviour could be ascertained simply by dropping themselves ten degrees on the social scale and pretending they were in the Philippines. (p.35)

There is something of the notion of mimicry in the way in which the Inits camouflage themselves when abroad, in much the same way as we have seen Stevens mimic the role of tourist in *Remains*, but the more telling point is not that they engage in such a practice but rather that they *have* to do so in the first place. Victoria may be able to insist elsewhere in the novel that '[m]y country is a poor one [but] the rich in our country are as rich as the richest American or German' (p.92) but at large in the cosmopolitan world such status counts for little as they are subjected to the stereotype of the Filipino abroad – domestic servant, sex trade worker, slave labour. Stepping out into the supposedly modern, cosmopolitan world, the Init's find themselves dropping not only 'ten degrees on the social scale' but also, in the prejudice and assumptions they face, many tens of years back in time.

Undeterred, or perhaps determined to change these prejudices and assumptions, Victoria Init's ambitions lie firmly in that wider cosmopolitan world, beyond the restrictive borders of her own nation. She 'was as ambitious as any woman in the world, and the way she saw it her new and developing role – and therefore the Congressman's – was not at home but in the world: which was an international place, *di ba?*' (p.27) Here Init is portrayed as the model of cosmopolitan busyness and ambition but there is something troubling about the dichotomy between home and world (suggesting a cosmopolitan world which is resolutely *not* home, a space where

Init *does not* belong), an effect doubled by the jarring Tagalog colloquialism²⁵⁰ which colours Init's discourse and places her firmly within her local context. Her views also jar with those of her congressman husband. Although he can acknowledge that '[i]f the country was to have a future it had to export something better than house-servants and whores' (p.34), Representative Init's ambitions ('he was in politics for money' – p.26) are more aligned to the local sphere, so that '[h]e was brilliantly successful at what he wanted to achieve on the national scene' (p.26). We are reminded, perhaps, of the tension between the professional and the family life, of which Ishiguro's narrators are such prime examples. Yet there is no privileging of the local over the international. Representative Init's domestic ambition is formed from the most base of instincts – money - thus aligning him more with the corrupt political machinations of Colonel Goreng or even the self-preservation of Lord Darlington than with 'local heroes' such as Chase, Eastman or Ng, an effect enhanced by the fact that – as the quotation above suggests – he goes about his tawdry business with considerable success. Nevertheless, his and Victoria's respective interests in the local and the international make clear which of the characters is likely to find a place in the world by the end of the novel and which, by contrast, is likely to be cut down by the pedagogical bonds of nationhood.

That narrative of Filipino nationhood is explored in detail in the first part of *Brownout*, which explores the nature of Filipino society through a shifting perspective which takes in numerous characters, the Inits included, from various walks of life and social spheres. Whereas in *Renegade* Mo will probe the inequities and faults of that society with playful affection, his portrayal of the Philippines in *Brownout* is

²⁵⁰ *di ba* translates roughly as 'right?' or 'isn't it?'.

somewhat more unsympathetic. The reader need only look at the opening line of the first chapter (assuming they have made it past the Prologue's descent into the lowest reaches of Filipino society) to ascertain the general tone of the narrative, as the narrator bleakly informs us that '[t]he country was on the slide, in the mire' (p.16). History has ill-prepared the nation for the modern world. The 'three hundred years in a Spanish convent and fifty in Hollywood' to which I have already alluded 'had not proved an ideal apprenticeship for the technological exigencies of the modern Asia' (p.16). As I have discussed elsewhere in this thesis, most notably in relation to *An Insular Possession*, technological developments – and the associated changes in temporal experience – are amongst the key features of cosmopolitanism. Unlike the prototypical global spaces of Asia which we have already encountered – Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Tokyo – the Philippines has struggled to shed its colonial past and take its place in the modern world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rundown technological infrastructure, exemplified by the 'brownouts' of the title, electrical power shortages which result in a dimming of the lights or a reduction in supply, and which seem like nothing so much as moments where time stops, or slows down, before everything flickers back to life again.

Of the colonial past it is the fifty years in Hollywood, rather than the three hundred in the convent, which appear to have left their mark on the national imagination. Neither *Brownout* nor *Renegade* have much to say about the legacy of the more than three centuries of Spanish rule from the late 1500s onwards, although Castro's Catholic education in the latter novel at least nods to this colonial past. The imaginative pull of America, which controlled the islands for the first half of the twentieth century, is on the other hand somewhat more substantial. As another of the novel's many

protagonists – Jack Beaufort, an Australian resident in the Philippines and married to a Filipino – observes:

“Filipinos don’t actually have a colonial chip on the shoulder... The ordinary *pinoy* likes America and Americans, in fact there’s nothing he’d like better than to become one. And as for the language of the oppressor issue, Holy Moses, they grow up speaking English.” (p.243)

The American influence is everywhere evident in the Philippines of *Brownout*. Thus the sometimes-journalist Boyet can consider himself ‘Top Gun at the typewriter’ (p.178) and the gangster Crescente can ‘remember...Sean Connery as Eliot Ness had used a pump-action 12-gauge’ (pp.200-201). We have, of course, encountered this American influence in many of the novels already considered in this thesis. From the political and cultural influence America exerts upon Japan in *Pale View* and *Artist*, through its growing hegemonic influence revealed in *Remains*, to the direct American voices of *An Insular Possession*’s protagonists and the indirect and shadowy role played by the nation behind the scenes in *Redundancy*, it is impossible to ignore the ubiquitous role played by the United States at the centre of the cosmopolitan world. Timothy Brennan has suggested that celebrations of cosmopolitanism have often in fact represented little more than a ‘surreptitious imaging of American values’²⁵¹, a kind of ‘America abroad’²⁵². It is just such an ‘imaging of American values’ which seems to inform the self-images of Filipino characters such as Boyet and Crescente in *Brownout*, raising the possibility that cosmopolitanism is less a model of hybridity and cross-cultural exchange and more, as Brennan suggests, ‘a veiled Americanism’²⁵³.

It is worth pausing briefly to explore the role played by Boyet and Crescente in the first part of *Brownout*. Both, in their own ways, contribute to the narration of Filipino

²⁵¹ Brennan, *At Home*, p.9.

²⁵² Brennan, *At Home*, pp.12 – 65.

²⁵³ Timothy Brennan, ‘Cosmo-Theory’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100:3 (2001), p.682.

identity which takes place in that section and, as we shall see, come to problematise the narrative of cosmopolitanism which follows in Part Two. Boyet stands as a portrait of cosmopolitan busyness, his harried professional life leaving little time for his family, despite the claim that 'Boyet was a family man first and foremost' (p.19). Boyet's primary occupation is as lawyer for 'Evergreen Enterprises, Mining and Forest Conservation'. The name is ironic. 'Evergreen' is in fact symbolic of the exploitative and acquisitive bent of many modern multinational firms. In their journey from local concern to transnational corporation (a journey which mirrors Victoria Init's personal ambitions) they show scant regard for the long-term wellbeing of the planet or its inhabitants. A glance at some of Boyet's early tasks serves to illustrate: he spends his first years with the company 'dealing with tribal minorities, fencing with the union leaders..., evading responsibilities for damage to roads, villages, the watertable, the earth, the world, the universe' (p.32). Boyet's role in all of this may be to clear up local difficulties but references to 'the earth, the world, the universe' indicate that both his own actions and those of 'Evergreen' have consequences which extend far beyond the discernible horizon. One such consequence is revealed towards the end of the novel (albeit by which time Boyet has left the company's employ), by which time 'Evergreen' have moved in to the field of hazardous waste disposal. As Ho observes, the company 'evolves from a national corporation involved in illegal logging to the shipment of toxic wastes from Germany to the Philippines, thus colluding in making the nation a dumping ground for the First World'²⁵⁴. For Boyet, as for the ordinary Filipino, this is one of the ways that the cosmopolitan imposes itself upon the local rather than being an experience associated with mobility and travel. But it also hints at the ways in which even ordinary, local actions carry with

²⁵⁴ Ho, pp.124-125.

them ethical considerations far beyond the horizons of any individual's small world. But the episode also echoes faintly back to *A Pale View of Hills*, where at the end of the Second World War Asia had also proved a 'dumping ground', or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say testing ground, for a different and even more violent form of toxic dumping. One might suggest that in the intervening years little has changed. Asia remains the West's waste ground; the difference is that what was once perpetrated as an act of war is now merely a business transaction within the globalised economy.

If Boyet's role with 'Evergreen' carries with it unforeseen ethical consequences then his second occupation – column writer for a local newspaper – appears to offer him a more direct form of agency. It is the newspaper rather than 'Evergreen' which offers him professional fulfilment and 'satisfies Boyet's ... crusading zeal' (p.32). Through his regular opinion column, 'Up Periscope', Boyet is able to pass comment on Philippine society, flashing his satirical pen at the corruption and crime which permeates all levels of the society he looks down upon. As such, Boyet participates in his own way in the narrating of his nation. But Boyet's agency is limited. As the narrator explains, 'Boyet's part in this was that of Greek chorus, free in his commentary but as powerless against the unrolling circumstances as the protagonists' (p.17). Through his column, Boyet emerges as 'a disempowered social subject, helpless against history and the corruption of his present circumstances'²⁵⁵, in much the same way as Chase and Eastman's venture into print in the *Lin Tin Bulletin* ultimately proves toothless. Boyet's business is, ultimately without much political purpose. Indeed, the principal consequence of his commitment to the professional

²⁵⁵ Ho, p.113.

sphere is – as was the case with the Inits - the ultimate sacrifice of his family life. This breakdown in the domestic sphere is signified in the frequent visits Boyet makes with his friend and editor, Nestor Chavez, to the local brothel. In his infidelity, these visits seem to stand as substitute for his home life whilst encapsulating some of the themes of modern life: the breakdown of the family, the fleetingness and impermanence of modern relationships, and the darker excesses of the cosmopolitan world such as the commoditisation of sex and of people hinted at in Boyet's visits to Momo's house of ill-repute.

Despite these dalliances with the seamier side of Philippine society, Boyet offers little more than a glimpse into the kind of poverty and marginality that often emerges as the excess of globalisation, especially outwith the 'First World'. As Elaine Ho suggests, 'Boyet's "Philippines" is comfortable, if parochial, rather than the habitat of the impoverished and the exploited'²⁵⁶. The reader's conduit into that Philippines of the impoverished and the exploited is the mobster Crescente Koyaw. Nephew of Victoria Init, Crescente represents the face of organised criminal activity (family motto: 'no witness, no crime' – p.53) in the developing world. Collector of fast cars and heavy duty firearms, Crescente rules his criminal gang through fear and treats the strip clubs and backstreets of Gobernador de Leon as his own personal fiefdom, dispensing benevolence and violence in equal measure. Crescente's underworld Philippines is a site of hostile cross-cultural contact, a miniature crisis-zone amid the apparent stability of a developing Third World power. Confronted by a group of drunken, loutish Australian tourists, insulted, assaulted and racially abused in his own country, Crescente's pursuit of the perpetrator leads to the brutal assassination of an

²⁵⁶ Ho, p.112.

innocent (but equally insensitive and racially abusive) German chef. The violent failure, at this lowest level of society, of such cross-cultural contact and coexistence foreshadows the larger failure of the international academic conference (for which Crescente will provide the security) in the second part of the novel. In the meantime, the conduct of the Westerners whom Crescente encounters in this earlier section of the novel recalls the earlier words of Representative Init: '[g]uilt, compunction, naivety, laziness, insularity – the notion that the whole world was California – these were the tiny slots and features in the daunting granite features of the foreigner' (p.26). There is in the Representative's words something of Brennan's complaint that cosmopolitanism is little more than a glib metaphor for American cultural and political domination and also something of the Western complacency which Ishiguro identifies in the quotation with which this thesis begins. Representative Init's insight reveals the weaknesses – the 'tiny slots and fissures' – within cosmopolitanism. Crescente's own violent self-assurance is similarly built upon 'tiny slots and fissures'. His fear of assassination at the hands of 'a gunman, sparrow²⁵⁷ or paid assassin' (p.54) hints at the legacy of a life spent in the crime-ridden gutter of society and foreshadows the attack which will scar the closing stages of the international conference.

The first part of *Brownout*, then, is primarily concerned with establishing a sense of Filipino national identity at the end of the twentieth century. That national identity is established through the quotidian experiences of a range of local protagonists. However, even as the narrative goes about its business of portraying daily life in Gobernador de Leon, so it cannot conceal the ways in which that everyday life is

²⁵⁷ As Castro explain in *Renegade or Halo?*, '[a] Sparrow was a member of a New People's Army urban hit-team' (*Renegade*, p.25).

influenced by forces outwith its local borders. That process actually begins in the novel's controversial Prologue, where the international is given a physical presence in the corpulent form of Professor Detlef Pfeidwengeler. Pfeidwengeler's presence in the Prologue is partly structural, its purpose to prejudice the reader ahead of his rather more significant contribution to the second half of the novel. However, his graphically portrayed sexual domination over the Filipina call girl also stands as a metaphor for the continued Western abuse of the so-called Third World. That western influence is also present in the American cultural references which frame the everyday lives of characters such as Boyet and Crescente. The relationship is not, however, one of one-way domination and control. Victoria Init's ambitions – which lie far beyond the borders of the Philippines – suggest that some form of agency might be open to those who might otherwise be thought of as cosmopolitanism's 'others'.

Part 2 and Epilogue

That agency is realised in the international conference which forms the centrepiece of the second section of *Brownout* and marks the culmination of Victoria Init's efforts to tap into the 'quick bucks' of tourism and attract inward investment and international recognition and influence to her impoverished provincial town. Grandly entitled 'Cultural Plurality in a World of Ecological Limits', the conference stands as metaphor for the cross-cultural contact that characterises the modern cosmopolitan world and affords Mo the opportunity to turn his satirical pen upon the world of academia. Indeed, Mo takes the opportunity to satirise the temporal – and temporary – fashionability of earnest and well-meaning academic schools, movements and theories and, in so doing, perhaps fires a warning shot across the bows of works such as this thesis. One of the delegates, Jack Beaufort, for example, is at work completing his 'Compendium of New Literatures in English':

It had all been breaking new ground when he started, with risk-taking involved for his career. Now it was very worthy still and not quite at the point where it was already old hat, but it had become a definite academic territory where the pioneers like himself were in danger of being evicted as squatters for having failed to register their claims earlier. (p.145)

It is in this ‘definite academic territory’ that Dr Ruth Neumark – the conference’s star attraction – and her sycophantic sidekick Omar Hamid plant their flag and stake their claim. Mo reserves his most biting satire for these two career academics, and for Neumark in particular. As Ho observes, ‘Mo takes every opportunity to...drive home the unsavouriness of her position as someone who claims radical credentials and the moral upper ground, and yet lives a life of First World privilege carefully concealed from the poor and oppressed with whom she professes solidarity’²⁵⁸. Thus Neumark excuses herself from the opening days of the conference, preferring the comforts of her five star hotel room and the long-distance telephone line home to New York, and thus too she cynically identifies a younger delegate as a contact worth cultivating since ‘[s]he needed to add a new system of cross-generational alliances to her network, otherwise so efficient over the years, if she was to stay in contention’ (p.191). These cynical political manoeuvres on the part of the keynote speaker make a mockery of the conference’s egalitarian aims and point to a larger cynicism surrounding the conference itself. The seemingly natural flow of ideas across cultures and disciplines is slowly revealed as a sham. Hired by Victoria Init to organise the conference, Carla Giolitti stage-manages its every detail, spending the long flight from North America to the Philippines deciding ‘which group of nationalities should encounter each other first’ (p.168). She has given similar attention to the carefully crafted guest list: ‘They just wanted to invite Americans, Australians, and Japanese, and I think Taiwanese, with the odd European. But I told them, that wasn’t the way. You’ll get more attention from our media if there is, er, third world involvement’

²⁵⁸ Ho, p.117.

(p.155). The cultural plurality of the conference delegates emerges almost as an afterthought, a publicity stunt rather than an organic process of cosmopolitan exchange, undermining the titular aims of the conference before it even begins. Hardly surprising, then, that despite Carla Giolitti's machinations, the delegates swiftly form their own allegiances based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour rather than shared academic interests and expertise. Thus, for example, 'the three Anglos, otherwise so disparate, had unconsciously drawn together in the first place: other birds of a feather were also in their different flocks throughout the room' (p.164).

As a contact zone, then, the conference centre emerges as a negative space where the potential of cross-cultural contact goes unfulfilled and the deeper ethnic, racial and religious divisions re-emerge to trouble the narrative of cosmopolitanism. The building itself is the physical monument to Victoria Init's ambition and global vision and represents her attempt to emulate the creation of 'the Cultural Centre and International Convention Centre in Manila' (p.35). But Victoria's perception of the building, which she figures as 'Imelda's Time Machine into the Philippine past (p.35), problematises both that space and its new sister building in Gobernador de Leon. Of the building in Manila she reflects that '[w]andering the Cultural Centre's huge halls, its silent escalators, its dumb air-conditioning, its lonely corridors, the aura of shattered greatness was inescapable' (p.35). The litany of haunting adjectives – huge, silent, dumb, lonely – speaks something of the functional soullessness of contemporary buildings and hints at a larger emptiness at the heart of the human experience of living in the late twentieth century. Meanwhile, the 'aura of shattered greatness' suggests a once vibrant and important past which never actually existed and seems to predict the similar fate which awaits Victoria's building which, with its

own 'lofty ceiling', its 'purring' water supply, and its 'air –con capable of cutting to the bone' (p.158), appears almost to be a simulacrum of its predecessor in the nation's capital. What is particularly striking is that both conference centres emerge as sites where the temporal takes on a heightened significance, with the references both to a 'time machine' and to 'shattered greatness' striking an elegiac note which recalls the nostalgic tone of Ishiguro's narratives and suggests that cosmopolitan living is characterised, in part at least, by this vague sense of loss, or of something missing.

The conference centre, then, appears increasingly problematic as a modern space of hybridity and exchange. The novel draws parallels between that problematic space and another which exemplifies the mobility, displacement, and fleeting exchanges and associations associated with cosmopolitan life: the airport. We have already seen the way in which air travel becomes the site of Carla Giolitti's manipulation of cosmopolitan contact as she plots the movements and encounters of the delegates whilst travelling to the Philippines. Mo prefigures this moment by having the second section of *Brownout* begins in the transit lounge of Manila's *Ninoy Aquino International Airport*. Professor Detlef Pfeidwengeler, last seen taking cross-cultural contact to grotesque extremes in the novel's Prologue, bemoans the airport's blank walls, unnatural lighting, and malfunctioning air conditioning, drawing comparisons with the mechanical functionality of the conference centre for which he is destined. The impersonality of the airport, in which 'the air-traveller was a piece of meat being microwaved in a giant see-through oven' (p.140), compares poorly with the nostalgically remembered Cunard lines, whose stewards boasted the 'capacity to match names to faces anticipating the computer age but worth cherishing in the age of the anonymity of air travel' (p.141). Pfeidwengeler's reminiscences remind us that

travel was once the preserve of the privileged, and places the Professor within that elite. But they also suggest that with the democratisation or expansion of travel to include the masses has come a greater impersonality and coldness which locates the airport alongside the conference centre as a negative space where, rather than experiencing the positive benefits of such mobility and movement across borders, the cosmopolitan citizen at the end of the Twentieth Century experiences such spaces as zones of alienation and displacement.

For the most part in the second section of *Brownout*, Mo's interest lies less in the actual content of the conference than in the political machinations which take place around its margins. The principal exception to this is Chapter 15, which takes the form of a 'Transcript of a Forum on the theme of "Asian Values in the 20th Century context: Assets or Anachronisms?"' (p.212) In this chapter the otherwise highly obtrusive third-person narrator withdraws completely to give the reader untrammelled access to the dialogue between several of the conference's key figures, from both 'first' world and 'third'. The forum marks the return to centre stage of Pfeidwengeler, and it is here that Mo fleshes out some of the Professor's more distasteful beliefs, building on the negative impression the reader has already formed from the Prologue and the scene in the transit lounge of Manila Airport. Responding to the opening question of whether it is possible to 'talk of a system of supra-national Asian values as opposed to distinctly national or...regional or tribal cultures in Asia' (p.212), Pfeidwengeler is scathing towards both his Filipino hosts and the wider Asian continent. In his claims that 'the Filipino is a pirate in his heart' (p.215), that 'democracy and human rights is not Asian concepts' (p.215) and in his accusations of widespread corruption ('every Filipino is also born a traitor as well as a liar' – p.220),

Pfeidwengeler speaks the language of colonial discourse, dismissing his host as inferior 'other' and revealing his own notion of Western supremacy. But Mo refuses to discredit Pfeidwengeler entirely. Unlike Ruth Neumark and Omar Hamid, Pfeidwengeler is at least portrayed as steadfast and committed in his beliefs, however unpopular that may make him. Thus Hamid's accusations of racism during the forum fail to hit their mark and thus also other Asian delegates are impelled to acknowledge elements of veracity in the German's claims, albeit with significant reservations. Nevertheless, with his pedagogical views and imposing behaviour Pfeidwengeler represents, both intellectually and physically, the colonial past and the continuing post-colonial influence of the West upon the continent of Asia.

One of Pfeidwengeler's claims which meets with little resistance relates to the enduring appeal of America and the place which that nation has in the imaginative construct of the Philippines. Indeed, according to Pfeidwengeler, that effect extends across the continent, as indicated in his rhetorical question to another delegate: 'you think the population of China would not jump on the first ship to America even tomorrow if allowed?' (p.216). The pull is, of course, economic and (as the reference to 'if allowed' suggests), ideological. Already, however, China's influence is growing not only over the rest of Asia but also in the world at large, even if the Taiwanese delegate, Napoleon Wong, describes that nation as 'the Rome and the Greece of Asia' (p.212), thus framing that ancient civilisation within a Western discourse. More presciently, Wong predicts towards the end of the session that 'the twenty first century will be that of China and it will be predicated on values inimical to [those of the west].' (p.229) As a moment of rhetorical prolepsis, Wong's claim reaches forward beyond both the time of the narrated events and that of the author to correctly

predict both the emergence of China as a twenty first century economic superpower and the clash of values which would emerge in the first decade of the next century, albeit the source of that conflict would lie not so much in China but rather elsewhere in Asia. That tension is similarly present in Jack Beaufort's observation that all successful economic powerhouses, whether in Asia or Europe, rely on 'a substantial if concealed amount of immigrant labour' (p.214). Such immigrant labour highlights one of the unchosen reasons for travel in the cosmopolitan world and also flags up a potential source of future tension in the host countries. But it is perhaps the reference to the concealment of this illegal labour force which best highlights its status as one of the unspoken excesses of globalisation, and casts the narrative's focus forward into both the forthcoming century and into Mo's next novel, *Renegade or Halo*².

The seeds of discord which emerge early in the conference and take root during the 'transcript' chapter foreshadow not only the geo-political landscape of the early twenty first century but also the more immediate fate of the conference itself. The apparently worthy cause of the gathering and the positive rhetoric of the delegates is exposed as something of a sham, the latter in particular undermined by the obvious truth that '[n]o one seemed to know much about the country they were in' (p.192). Elaine Ho neatly illustrates the manner in which the much vaunted 'plurality' of the conference fails to realise its potential against the reality of selfishness and self-promotion:

More than just a meeting place of the vainglorious, the conference is the fictional space in which the worst aspects of globalism circulate and manifest their dominance over the lives of individuals, local and foreign alike.²⁵⁹

The edifice of cosmopolitan cooperation and exchange falls apart and the divide between East and West, rich and poor, privileged and disadvantaged, is revealed to be

²⁵⁹ Ho, p.116.

as deep as ever despite, or perhaps in part because, of Carla Giolitti's best efforts to manufacture an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.

Much has been made of the loose structure of *Brownout*, especially in relation to the apparent disparity between the two main sections of the novel, but this appears to be precisely Mo's point. The very effects of the global upon the local are embedded in the novel's structure as the local characters, so prominent in the first section of the novel, all but disappear in the second, drowned out by the louder claims (and voices) of Pfeidwengeler, Neumark and the other, mostly western, delegates. As such, *Brownout* stages the 'explosion of the claims of marginality in a game of power'²⁶⁰ in which the global is always more powerful than the local. Tellingly, however, that repressed local identity does return to haunt the narrative of cosmopolitanism in *Brownout*. The conference finale is scarred by a terrorist attack which claims the life of Congressman Init. In fact, the attack is carried out by a local criminal group, their intended target the rival mobster Crescente, but in both style and scope it prefigures the major terrorist attacks which will come to symbolise the deep divisions, hinted at in the conference, which mark the first decade of the new millennium.

The terror attack marks the end of the conference but not quite the end of *Brownout*. In keeping with the novel's anomalous structure, Mo includes an Epilogue which carries the reader twenty-seven years on from the time of the conference and explains the fate of many of the conference's principle protagonists. Whilst there is nothing particularly unusual in such a postscript –as many critics note, in this regard Mo merely follows in the footsteps of authors such as Dickens and Waugh – what is

²⁶⁰ Ho, p.121.

significant about the Epilogue in *Brownout* is the fact that it carries the reader several years forward into *their own* future, as well as that of both the author and of the time of narration. By the grace of numerous references to real historical events and personages, most notably the deposed Marcos regime, we can locate the time of the narrated events in *Brownout* somewhere between 1990 and 1995, meaning that the Epilogue must fall between 2017 and 2022, far into the future of both author and – for the time being at least – reader. Mo indulges himself with humorous references to medical cures for obesity and hair loss but the proleptic postscript also has more serious functions. For one, it allows Mo the satisfaction afforded to ‘the satirist-as-moralist as he metes out poetic justice on the characters’²⁶¹. Mo reserves the worst fates for Ruth Neumark and Omer Hamid, and in so doing perhaps sounds a warning against striving too hard to make the cosmopolitan world the place you call home. Whilst Hamid is afforded the faint comfort of death, albeit a particularly gruesome one at the hands of African cannibals, Neumark suffers the twin indignities of a long deterioration into dementia and a rather more rapid decline in the relevance of her life’s work in the face of new historical and cultural circumstances. But it is the references to nuclear armament, toxic dumping and technological piracy which point, perhaps, to the most interesting and serious point of the Epilogue, predicting as they do some of the more pressing and serious problems which will emerge in the new century. As such, the Epilogue is an apt conclusion to a novel which, whilst apparently rooted in the historical moment of its composition, has much to say about the near future into which it casts its gaze. More than any other novel considered so far in this thesis, *Brownout* sheds a sidelight onto the newly emerging cosmopolitan

²⁶¹ Ho, p.119.

world and finds, in the shadows, cause for concern. It is a cause which will be taken up further in Mo's most recent novel, *Renegade or Halo*².

***Renegade or Halo*²**

In *Renegade or Halo*², Timothy Mo continues to explore some of the same themes and locations which informed his previous novel, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*. Like that novel, *Renegade* is concerned with the ways in which marginal individuals attempt to cope with and indeed act upon the exigencies of the wider world and the historical forces which drive it. And again like that novel, Mo takes as his starting point the Philippines in its post-colonial moment in the final decades of the twentieth century. However, *Renegade* diverges from its predecessor in a number of significant ways. Whereas in *Brownout* Mo explored the effect upon the local when the global descends upon it, in *Renegade* he is concerned instead with the ways in which a certain type of cosmopolitan citizen copes when forced out of the local and into the wider world. This change in focus from inside to outside is reflected in the novel's form. Gone is the loose, disparate structure and shifting point of view of *Brownout*, and in its place comes the *picaro* figure in the form of the novel's protagonist and first-person narrator, Rey Archimedes Blondel Castro. Through Castro, Mo examines the cosmopolitan moment, handing his protagonist the unenviable task of 'narrating the world at the end of the twentieth century'²⁶². Forced into exile for a murder he did not commit but at which he was present and at least partially complicit, Castro embarks upon a voyage of exile around the hot spots and danger zones of the globalised economy. In so doing, he narrates both the Filipino national identity in the late twentieth century and also that of the global underclass, raising issues of agency, complicity and historical responsibility. His narrative also explores in its telling the

²⁶² Ho, p.127.

mobility of the modern citizen and, in particular, some of the unchosen reasons for, and modes of, travel which are forced upon the exile and the migrant. Such travels also expose Castro to the violence and conflict which is never far from the surface as he narrates the troubling history of the world at a moment of crisis and transition.

My analysis of *Renegade* falls into two parts, loosely termed 'home' and 'exile'. Whilst each informs the other, in the first part I shall concentrate on representations of the Philippines which will be familiar from my earlier analysis of *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*. I will trace the roots of Castro's sense of identity and agency, with particular attention paid to a nascent talent for mimicry which will be put to more practical use later in his life, and also to Castro's sense of group identity which he frames in terms of the 'tribe'. I will also identify, once again, the ever-present and all-pervading influence of America upon Castro and his contemporaries. In the second part of my analysis, I shall explore the growing sense of alienation and rootlessness experienced by Castro as he is forced out into the world at large, and examine the ways in which his odyssey around the crisis points and blind spots of the cosmopolitan world touches upon important contemporary issues such as illegal immigration and labour, cultural incommensurability and religious tension. More broadly, I shall examine the ways in which Castro seeks, within these strained conditions, to negotiate a kind of cosmopolitan agency. I shall also consider the questions of complicity, responsibility and ethical behaviour which arise out of such negotiations. Finally, I shall examine the mobility of the contemporary cosmopolitan citizen as represented by Castro, suggesting ways in which such mobility draws attention to some of the temporal conditions of cosmopolitanism, most notably the

double-time which I have identified elsewhere in terms of ‘sedate urgency’ and the ‘time-lag’.

Home

As representative of the global underclass, and as recorder of its history, Castro is ideally qualified. Like Adolph Ng in *The Redundancy of Courage*, Castro is something of an outsider even in his own country, firstly on account of his size (and in typically provocative fashion Mo makes clear that his employment of that adjective is not confined to Castro’s height) and also as a result of the colour of his skin. Son of a Filipina bar girl and an African-American serviceman who absconded even before he was born (thus in some ways recalling the Sachiko/Mariko subplot in *A Pale View of Hills*), Castro acquires the nickname Sugar Rey at a young age. The name is his own suggestion, the first hint of a willingness to comply with the wishes of the larger group which will constitute one of his key survival techniques in later life. But it also illustrates his ability to manipulate that group. Awarded the alternative nickname Frankenstein by his school friends, Castro displays an early talent for mimicry – ‘[o]bligingly, I’d lurch around the yard, swinging my arms stiffly by my side’ (p.10) – which will develop into another of his key strategies for survival. Despite the theatrics however, the name fails to satisfy, not least because of its factual inaccuracy. Instead, the young Castro suggests Sugar Rey, a reference to the boxer of the same name but more so to the popular Asian dessert of halo² (pronounced hallow-hallow), ‘the many-hued and multi-textured confection of ice-cream, cereals, neon syrups, crystallised fruits, frosty shavings, leguminous preserves and bloated pulses that you can find under different names all over South Asia’ (p.11). As Leith observes, it is an apt choice not only for Castro’s name but also as a title for the novel itself:

As metaphor, [halo²] stands not only for Rey's genetic diversity, but for the collision of cultures that texture his appearance, and the collision of language and habits of thought that texture his narrative.²⁶³

The Philippines which Castro narrates is one familiar to the reader from *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard*. Here again is a nation whose principal export is people: 'doctor to Alabama...domestic help to Singapore or Hong Kong, tailor to Jeddah, even frostie girl to Japan' (p.103). The list, delivered to Castro by his friend Danton, is intended to highlight the apparent insanity of a group of Vietnamese boat people trying to get *in* to the Philippines when '[e]verybody in da Philippines who can get da puck out of here doing it man' (p.103). Danton's incredulity reminds us of the inequitable nature of globalisation and cosmopolitan exchange, suggesting that however far down the ladder one particular group may be (the snakes and ladder metaphor is used throughout by Castro to trace the rise and fall in his fortunes), there are always others even less fortunate and more imposed upon by the forces of history. But the list, and the reference to the refugees, also foreshadows – quite closely in places – Castro's own future exile whilst also, of course, linking this narrative back to *Brownout*, which similarly foregrounds the outward migration of its people as a key element of Filipino national identity.

Many of those who migrate do so for economic needs and, as we have already seen in *Brownout*, for many the ultimate beacon for a better future, economic and otherwise, remains the United States. The imaginative pull of both that nation and its culture again figures prominently in Castro's narrative of Filipino identity. Castro's (absent) American father stands as metaphor for American influence in the region, both historical and contemporary (the latter further illustrated by the American Air Base Castro's home island). As an 'Amerasian', Castro feels the pull of the United States

²⁶³ Sam Leith, 'Hang on a Mo: Renegade or Halo?', *Observer* 15 August 1999, Review Section, p.12.

particularly keenly: 'All Amerasians dreamed of the States, thought of it as their spiritual home' (p.37). It is perhaps inevitable, given this spiritual pull, that Castro's exile shall take him, ultimately, to the United States. Significantly, however, his short stay in America is the only stage of his exile which is not narrated in detail. Instead, we leave Castro pushing off from the shores of Cuba on a raft pointed towards Florida and crowded with refugees most of whom will not complete the journey, picking up the story only upon his return to the Philippines. His narrative makes no mention of the intervening period. Like his absent American father, Castro's time in America is absent from the narrated events, and it is this absence which menaces the text with its brooding silence, hovering over the narrative just as its geo-political influence hangs over the region.

Like *Brownout* then, Castro's narrative in *Renegade* explores Filipino identity, touching on many of the same themes and concerns of that earlier novel. However, unlike *Brownout*, which focuses on the Philippines as a space of cosmopolitan contact, Castro's is a history of the Philippines told from the outside. Or, rather, given that by the time of narration Castro has returned to the Philippines, it is the narrative of the Filipino in exile, the Filipino in the world. Castro's exile, the reasons for which I will return to shortly, takes him from the Philippines to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, the Arabian Gulf, London, the high seas, Cuba and America. Just as happens on a more minor scale in the conference in *Brownout*, what Castro discovers is that in each of these cosmopolitan spaces groups and affiliations become stronger. Thus, in London illegally, he is able to melt into the Filipino community where he is protected and hidden. Similarly 'there were any number of us in Hong Kong lousing the joint up...We were the largest group of foreigners in town, just like slaves

outnumbered citizens in classical Athens' (p.160). The reference to slaves is intentional, the low paid and often illegal labourers such as Castro representing the unseen but essential cog in economic wheel in 'the shiny steel and glass temple to Mammon' (p.161) that is Hong Kong, just as Jack Beaufort makes mention of the vital role played by immigrant labour in successful Asian economies during the academic conference in *Brownout*. But of more immediate interest is the fact that Castro discovers that, far from acting as hybrid cosmopolitan spaces, the locations he encounters around the world serve to strengthen notions of national identity. Far from the cosmopolitan world being one of plurality and cross-cultural exchange, it appears as a space of tribal affiliation and ghettoisation where the best protection from the violent realities of that world is found amongst one's own.

My reference to a sense of tribalism and ghettoisation is a deliberate one, for Mo suggests in *Renegade* that it is into just such tribes that human beings organise themselves. As Danton announces early in the novel, 'Da whole world's made up of gangs, man. Way it is. Toughest gang of muddapukkas is called American Senate' (p.58). As well as illustrating Mo's virtuoso handling of dialect and accent, Danton's statement highlights the role which tribal affiliations will play in the novel, whilst once again foregrounding the omnipresent influence of the United States upon the imagination of the wider world. Castro himself gives indication of his own perceived position in the world by acknowledging himself as one of those 'who were already doomed to failure for lack of connections' (p.53). So it is that although both Danton and Castro earn places at a prestigious law school, the demarcation between themselves and the rich, privileged Frat boys remains clear: 'The Fraternity thought it had assimilated us, put us in the tribe, but we knew so much better we didn't even

have to voice this sense of apartness' (p.53). This sense of apartness is illustrated during a trip – ostensibly a vacation to the island of Palawan but in reality an attempt to exploit a group of Vietnamese refugees held in a detention camp on the island – organised by the group's thoroughly corrupt and morally redundant tutor, Attorney Caladong. Charged with exploiting these vulnerable exiles by offering, for their life savings, the false promise of visas to the promised land of America, Castro instead finds himself relating to the very people he is supposed to be exploiting:

I figured it...took ingenuity to bribe your way out of Vietnam, avoid shipwreck on those rickety craft, festooned with humanity like a tenement drying line; survive multiple rape and being hit over the head with boat-irons by Thai and Cambodian fishermen, followed by machine-gunning by the Malaysian Navy, and finally dodging us land-pirates. (p.78)

Castro's assessment of the ordeal undertaken by the boat people speaks something of the violence and criminality of the cosmopolitan world and again foreshadows many of the trials which lie ahead for Castro himself, but it also indicates a sense of kinship with the Vietnamese refugees, a recognition of his affiliation with this group and a disavowal of the elite, privileged and exploitative group of law students to which he nominally belongs.

Such recognition and disavowal is confirmed later in the novel when Castro offers an assessment of his own tribal affiliations:

I was a man. That was my primary visible tribe, but I was also underdog by birth and by temperament. That was my real tribe, that of the despised outsiders, trying to get in from the cold. (p.190)

That he must find a way of coming in from the cold is the result of one of the darkest episodes in a novel replete with moments of violence and horror. Castro finds himself witness to the Frat house rape and murder of Haydee, a local waitress and minor acquaintance. Whilst his disgust and distress is made evident in the narrative, Castro does little to try and stop the attack, and although he plays no part in either the rape or

the murder he *does* take his turn plunging the knife into the corpse as a guarantee of his silence: 'I took the knife...and did it. There was no more resistance or drama than there would have been from stabbing a foam-cushion' (p.129). This is perhaps the most troubling piece of dialogue in the entire novel and the one which casts a large degree of guilt upon Castro. The detached tone, prosaic language, and claims of 'no drama' point to a level of complicity regardless of whether or not he actually participated in the assault itself. That complicity is emphasised in the leading role that Castro plays in the removal and disposal of the body, as the perpetrators attempt to cover up their crime and evade responsibility for their actions, Castro included. As such, this small local scene stands as metaphor for the larger questions of historical agency which have informed this thesis. Just as was the case with Ono and Stevens, for example, Castro's passive non-participation and complicity in cleaning up the mess raises uncomfortable questions of what constitutes ethical behaviour on the part of the individual in the face of larger forces which s/he cannot directly control.

Exile

Whatever the ethical considerations, Haydee's murder does indeed have consequences for Castro. Framed by the privileged perpetrators, Castro, Danton and a few of the other students who are at the college through merit rather than money (and the connections which Castro has already owned to lacking) are forced to flee the country aboard a container ship bound for Hong Kong. On board, Castro is forced to watch on helplessly as the others are violently attacked and murdered by the lawless Ukrainian crew. Danton, in particular, dies a heroic death, saving Castro's life in the process. Danton's actions suggest, perhaps, that it is in friendship, rather than the tribe, that the closest bonds exist and his deeds inspire much of Castro's subsequent

battle to survive. Castro's narrative often recalls his friendship with Danton and, in particular, Danton's sacrifice. Haydee, by contrast, rates no further mention.

The piratical events upon the international waters between the Philippines and Hong Kong introduce Castro to the new reality of his place in the world. It is a world in which all the old certainties of right and wrong, truth and justice, are turned on their head. Later, working illegally on a chain gang in the fictional Gulf state of Bohaiden, Castro identifies '[a] low-key foreboding. It was the surroundings. It was finding ourselves somewhere we didn't belong with nobody who cared for us being any the wiser. It was Limbo'. (p.282) The liminal zone in which Castro finds himself is a bleak and threatening depiction of the dispossession and statelessness which is one of the unspoken excesses of cosmopolitanism. His fears draw attention to the myriad of displaced 'others' who are elided from the official narrative of cosmopolitanism - the illegal aliens, the stateless workers, the international refugees, the secretly imprisoned – and whose uncanny return haunts these more celebratory narratives. But, on a larger scale, Castro's sense of limbo might also be seen to stand as a metaphor for the experience of cosmopolitanism for the majority of people. For many, the experience of cosmopolitanism is, in part at least, one of bewilderment and unease and of standing still as the world flies by around them. Whilst their circumstances are very different, we may read little actual difference between Castro's sense of alienation and that which afflicts Etsuko in post-war Japan and 1970s England, or Stevens in 1980s England or, indeed, Chase and Eastman as they see out the seemingly endless monsoon season by the banks of the Pearl River.

Castro's place in the world is, however, somewhat precarious even when compared to these other characters. Speaking of his fellow workers in Bohaiden, he might effectively be describing himself when he observes that '[a]s illegals, they'd entered the realm of ghosts. They were non-persons' (p.308). Ghosts, of course, may haunt their hosts, a point not lost on Castro who recognises a degree of agency in his new, lowly status: 'I was now an illegal...Those truly without hope become very dangerous: they have nothing to lose...wasn't the revolt of Spartacus the most dangerous Rome ever faced?' (p.308) Here again is the novel's recurring slave motif, carrying with it the suggestion that the underclass as tribe possess a degree of agency with the potential to menace their masters. For Elaine Ho this is a very cosmopolitan form of agency:

Castro's tribe is culturally unbound, a comradeship which crosses gender and race, in a global underclass whose migrancy is set in motion by the dynamics of capitalism in the late twentieth century.²⁶⁴

Cast-out and displaced, freed of national ties, the tribe of the underclass, as cosmopolitanism's excess, take on a potentially dangerous form. But as Ho herself acknowledges, 'the tribe, as it is represented in Mo's novel, is [a] negative term. In Castro's world, tribes are savage, the fusion of primal and barbaric human urges whipped into action by specific combinations of circumstances'²⁶⁵. Furthermore, as Finney points out, the notion of tribalism is often used in the novel to demonise a form of nationalism, rather than to celebrate a kind of collective cosmopolitan agency:

Tribalism is used in [the] pejorative sense repeatedly throughout *Renegade* to signify the oppressive nature of nationalism – its racist, religious, or cultural exclusivity; its need to define itself by casting immigrants and illegals as its despised but needed other.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Ho, p.140.

²⁶⁵ Ho, p.139.

²⁶⁶ Brian Finney, 'Migrancy and the Picaresque in Timothy Mo's *Renegade or Halo*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 49.1 (Fall 2007), p.67.

Far from offering the possibility of cosmopolitan agency, the tribe emerges instead as the perpetuation of nationhood, consigning the likes of Castro to the underclass rather than offering a potential way of resisting that hegemonic figuring. The tribe is, by its very nature, exclusive and exclusionary. One either belongs or not. As such, it appears in fact to stand in opposition to the open, all-embracing arms of cosmopolitanism.

Rather more effective as a form of agency and resistance is Castro's talent for mimicry, illustrated in the opening pages of the novel in his obliging schoolyard response to the inappropriate Frankenstein nickname. Far more political, but no less performative, is his mimicking of the role of servant whilst in the employ of the Smiths, a family of old colonial hands, in Hong Kong. His role as servant draws obvious comparisons with Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, although unlike Stevens, whose natural habitat is that of the servant and whose mimicry is employed as a strategy for survival *outside* that habitat, Castro is no natural servant. But Castro's service to others also stands as a metaphor for the larger experience of cosmopolitanism. As Kerr points out, '[m]ost adult human beings work for somebody else'²⁶⁷. The metaphor is extended when Castro claims that 'the loyal retainer guards his employer's property *more* jealously than if it was his own' (p.238, original emphasis), a sentiment repeated later in the novel when Castro admires the unswerving loyalty shown by merchant seamen towards their captain, and the way in which they look after the ship, despite the fact that such 'reverence...was not extended...to the Owners, the impersonal shipping firm' (p.435). Both examples speak something of the nature of modern professionalism, where the private is

²⁶⁷ Douglas Kerr, 'Timothy Mo's *Man Sundae*, and Other Overseas Workers', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 36:15 (2001), p.20.

sacrificed to the workplace and where for the majority of workers the day is passed labouring largely for the benefit of others, often unseen and often large faceless companies, rather than working for one's own benefit.

In Castro's case he finds an employer who is relatively benevolent, and Castro soon shrinks into the role. Thus he is very quickly 'up for all the servant's tics and tricks' (p.186), and thus also is he wise to the dangers of letting his mask slip, so that '[w]hen [Mr] Smith begins to suspect that Castro is brighter than others think, Castro deliberately assumes the camouflage of the ignorant Filipino servant'²⁶⁸. The adoption of such camouflage is necessary – there is much at stake for Castro and the exposing of his real identity could lead to a return to the Philippines and almost certain arrest and imprisonment. The ability to take on such camouflage will stand him in good stead throughout the novel. As Ho observes, 'an undoubted strategy of his survival is the ability to bond with his exploiters, to assume the manner of subservience and nurture their reliance on his indispensable service. In doing so he exercises but also masks an intelligence that is no less muscular than the physique with which he is endowed'²⁶⁹. In this, Castro is the direct descendent of Adolph Ng, and one moment of shared complicity with Mr Smith illustrates both this similarity with Ng and the manner in which the camouflage of mimicry is never entirely complete. Witness to some characteristic theatrics from the household's maid, another Filipina, Castro describes how 'Commander Smith and I shared a glance of amusement which wasn't that of employer and man-servant' (p.275). The glance shares some of that same complicity that was evident between Adolph Ng and Colonel Goreng in *Redundancy* as Ng negotiated his freedom, and it acknowledges that both are knowing participants

²⁶⁸ Finney, 'Migrancy and the Picaresque', p.73.

²⁶⁹ Ho, p.129.

in the subterfuge. But it also undermines the agency present in Castro's performative act. Ultimately he is not entirely convincing as a servant, and his continued survival depends on the discretion of his employer and exploiter. As such it is a dangerous position. Indeed, it might be argued that all Castro's mimicry really achieves is to make him 'a generally uncomplaining instrument of other people's interests, an engine of alienated labour'²⁷⁰. Indeed, Castro experiences such a realisation in an observation towards the end of the novel, when serving as a merchant seaman. Drawn to the company of the ship's officers, rather than the ordinary crew (of which tribe he is a member), Castro reflects that 'I was catching tantalising glimpses of the world I should have been moving in, the person I could be...if I'd been anything other than a Filipino' (p.457). Whatever agency Castro's recourse to mimicry may afford him enables him merely to survive, to stand still, rather than to act positively upon the world around which he travels and to achieve the potential his education and background promised.

That Castro does travel so extensively, and under such circumstances as he does, reveals much about the nature of mobility – and in particular about the unchosen reasons for travel – in the contemporary world. In the course of his exile Castro experiences practically every form of travel known to man – as passenger on a ferryboat and stowaway on a trawler, as seaman in the most modern of vessels and as voyager on an ancient dhow, on airlines and private jets, cars, London buses and rafts packed with refugees. But for Castro travel is a necessity rather than a luxury, and his experience of even the more comfortable modes of transport reflects that fact. Just as 'Dubai and Bahrain...had bustling international airports where the locals could go and

²⁷⁰ Douglas Kerr, 'Timothy Mo's *Man Sundae*, and Other Overseas Workers, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 36.15 (2001), p.18.

gawp' (p.337) (gawp presumably at the privileged others who had the means and wherewithal to actually use the facility), so Castro's travels often serve to marginalise him. Thus he flies 'slave class in the rear' (p.278) of the Airbus which carries him and the Smiths from Hong Kong to Bohaiden, his employers enjoying a rather more comfortable trip further down the plane, and thus also when he finds himself behind the wheel of a Toyota Lexus in Hong Kong it is in his capacity as chauffeur to the Smiths rather than as a motorist in his own right.

At one point, Castro's duties as chauffeur extend to that of driver and escort to the Smiths' two daughters and their friends on a vacation to Singapore and the Malaysian peninsular. It is during this trip that Castro encounters most closely the rising local tensions which will spread to become the dominant global concern in the new century. Bathing by a secluded beach on the Malaysian coast, the party suddenly come under attack from a stone-throwing mob: 'Uh-oh, I thought. Wrong place, wrong time. And a moment later as a pair of head-shawled crones advanced on me, shaking their outstretched hands, I got it: wrong dress code, too' (p.233). What Castro comes to realise somewhat too late is that they are in Malaysia, 'a land on the slippery slope of religious hysteria' (p.258). The beach becomes a contact zone between two incompatible ideologies, figured metaphorically by the shawled women on the one hand and the western swimwear ('strategically placed perforations, lattice works, holes, buckles, laces, and windows [which] were more provocative than nudity' – p.233). The sheer incommensurability of the two cultures, later reinforced in Bohaiden by the criticism explicit in Castro's observation that 'they lopped off the heads and hands of murderers and thieves as if there was no tomorrow and dumped mechanical grab-fuls of boulders on adulteresses' (p.307) not only foreshadows the

religious tensions which rise to prominence in the wake of the September 11 attacks but also reminds us that this tension was already there at the time of the narrated events and that 9/11 marked an escalation of these tensions rather than a starting point. That is to say, to return once more to Ishiguro's words, some of the 'seeds of things that didn't go so well' were already very much in evidence at the time of the events narrated in *Renegade*.

Travelling is, of course, a mode of being in which we become more acutely aware of time and many of Castro's experiences encapsulate this temporal factor. Aboard a dhow between Bohaiden and India, Castro reflects that:

Out of sight of land and when captain used his sails as auxiliaries, we could have been the contemporaries of Sinbad. I wouldn't have been surprised to see the Roc flap past, instead of the frittery jet wakes of the Air Bohaiden Airbus. Our keel carved through waters that were immemorial trade lanes centuries before Magellan ever set foot on Mactan... (p.363)

The passage is rich in temporal imagery, the palimpsest of the trade lines reminding us that cosmopolitan exchange and trade existed in this part of the world before the West was even aware of its existence, whilst the sky is scratched by those modern day mechanical Rocs which more than any other piece of technology make possible the contemporary shrinking of the world. Similarly, to Castro the aeroplane which carries him and the Smiths to Bohaiden is 'a miracle of technology made prosaic only by the imaginative as well as physical indolence of the travelling public, [and] in all respects a Time Machine as well as annihilator of geographical distance...Going from Hong Kong to Bohaiden was like losing three centuries of human endeavour' (p.277). Again the passage is rich in temporal detail, contrasting the very modern technology of the Airbus (and the complacency with which we take such technological advances for granted, and the effects they have on our experience of time, for granted) with the historical backwardness of the destination to which that technology transports them.

Once again it highlights the contradictions and conflicts of modern society which undermine the smooth narrative of equitable transnational cohabitation in the late twentieth and early twenty first century.

Castro experiences this double-time of modernity first hand. While his exile is punctuated with moments of highly kinetic drama and activity, and characterised as a whole by a sense of being ‘on the run’, this frantic experience of the cosmopolitan world is supplemented by the same slowing down or idleness that I have identified in other novels in this thesis. Castro experiences an early example of this during his successful spell as star player on the college basketball team. Whilst the other players had to compete in real time, Castro explains the advantage he enjoys because he ‘made my own time: I had as long as I wanted; or I lived in a life a second ahead or a second behind everyone else’ (p.62). Castro’s experiences of altered time on the basketball court are positive ones, a reflection of his superiority over the other players in that particular contact zone. Generally, however, his experiences are less positive. Stowed away on the Ukrainian boat out of the Philippines, having seen Danton and the others killed before his eyes, Castro must wait out the remainder of the journey: ‘Time extended itself. Seconds seemed like minutes’ (p.141). This extension of time will become even more pronounced during his time as an illegal labourer in Bohaiden. Drafted into a trip to India to help his ‘employer’ save a business contract, Castro responds to the complaints of another colleague, a supervisor, who bemoans the delays and indeed the trip as a whole, which has taken him away from work he could ill afford to leave behind in Bohaiden:

My time hadn’t been my own since I scrambled fifty feet up the side of the freighter in Manila Bay...I climbed half a hundred feet but descended into another world, that of the international under-class who were the slaves of our century...The concept of wasting time just didn’t apply to me. (p.370)

If the loss of control over time is identified here by Castro as one the ways in which the under-class is enslaved in the contemporary world, then we are left to consider whether this may not be said of most cosmopolitan citizens. Caught between the frantic rush of the 24/7 society and the moments when time appears to slow down, it is perhaps one of the features of modern living that we are no longer in control of our own time. We might recall the sense of limbo identified by Castro in relation to his ‘illegal’ status and again be drawn to similar instances in some of the novels already considered in this thesis. In the general sense of torpor evident in Castro’s sense of being outwith time there are echoes again of the traders waiting out the monsoon season in *An Insular Possession* or the citizens of Nagasaki waiting for something to happen in *A Pale View of Hills*. More generally, in the loss of control over time there is something of Stevens’s ‘very busy right now’ moment in *Remains*, or of Banks’s increasingly frantic race against time in *Orphans*. The cosmopolitan condition, it seems, is one where we simultaneously have all the time in the world and no time at all. Whichever the case may be at any particular moment, control of that time appears elusive.

Perhaps then what defines modern time is a sense of futility, a sense of running ever faster just to stand still. Serving as a merchant seaman, Castro identifies just such a phenomenon:

We came together by chance, were intimate in our relaxing and working lives to the extent you wouldn’t be even with family ashore...were parted, whirled away on other voyages, on different ships, to alternate hemispheres, sometimes to ship together months or years hence, sometimes never to meet again in our lives, but always to take leave of each other with a casual and indifferent nod. (p.451)

Castro’s depiction of the profession serves, I would suggest, as a more than adequate metaphor for society as a whole, the casually acquired and discarded close acquaintances more suited to a social networking website than a place of work, the

chance nature of encounters, the arbitrary friendships and alliances, and always the mobility of the age that might carry you to ‘alternate hemispheres’. But the ultimate pointlessness of all that effort is captured by Castro on his return to port after one trip: ‘Coming bleary-eyed into Harwich in the early Autumn chill, I asked myself what the fuck it had all been in aid of when I was now returning to the England I had left’ (p.455). A similar experience awaits Castro when he finally returns to the Philippines. Many changes have taken place in his absence, not the least of which is the arrival of cable television, which meant that ‘[t]here was no need to leave the discomfort of your own hooch to see the world; the world would come to you at the touch of the button’ (p.536). The phenomenon of the world imposing upon the local is one that has recurred throughout the novels considered in this thesis, for example in *Remains* in Stevens’s assertion that he had witnessed the best the world had to offer from the comfort of Darlington Hall, or in the international academic community which descends upon Gobernador de Leon in *Brownout*. In this case, the fact that the world is now available at the push of a button perhaps encourages Castro once again to question the purpose of his lengthy exile and in particular the physical exertions which have seen him literally travel around the world, only to find himself right back where he started from, and with that world now on his doorstep.

There is another change which has taken place during Castro’s absence, a change minor in its detail but which illustrates the unimaginable largeness of the cosmopolitan world and the way in which an event on one side of the world can have consequences in the alternate hemisphere. In addition, it gives the novel an extraordinary and quite unintended resonance with the composition of this thesis. On his return, Castro’s sister proudly announces that ‘I got job now assembly at Timex

factory' (p.518) Thanks to a number of epistolary chapters throughout the novel, and to Castro's reference to his 'seven years away' (p.532) we may date his return to the Philippines to 1993. The small detail of his sister's new job takes on a global significance thanks to that date. In 1993, Timex closed their factory in Dundee after nearly fifty years and having employed more than seven thousand local workers at the peak of its activity. The closures followed a long and bitter period of industrial action over plans to reduce wages and staffing levels in order to compete with cheaper labour available elsewhere in the world, principally Asia²⁷¹. The tiny detail of Bambi's new job thus takes on a much bigger significance in the narrative of globalisation and cosmopolitanism and reminds us that we do not necessarily need to look to the other side of the world for globalisation's under-class, its victims, its losers.

Conclusion

The Timex episode serves to illustrate the ways in which seemingly trivial narrative details can take on a much wider significance when placed within the larger global context. Two further and apparently equally trivial events, one each from the two novels considered in this chapter, emphasise this point and indicate the ways in which such novels inevitably betray the circumstances of their composition and, to return once more to Ishiguro's words, contain within their narratives the seeds of things which would subsequently go wrong. The first of these events occurs in the first section of *Brownout*, when two of the Filipino protagonists – Boyet and Nestor – visit Momo's, one of the city's many houses of ill repute. The understandably awkward atmosphere in the waiting salon which they share with three Filipino attorneys is

²⁷¹ James Rougvie, 'Timex pulls the plug on Dundee plant', *Scotsman*, (last updated 28 January 2005), <<http://heritage.scotsman.com/heritage/Timex-pulls-the-plug-on.2598593.jp>> [accessed 22 May 2009].

broken by the men's shared distress at the television coverage of a hotel fire in South Korea:

Tiny but still human figures perched on sills thirty, forty storeys up, horrible tongues of orange flame and filthy smoke solid enough to eat, reaching towards them. The first to stand it no longer jumps and plummets, the arms and legs waving; you can see the consideration and deliberate intent of the act, it was no accident. The men in Momo's sala murmur, shake their heads. (p.77)

The episode serves primarily to allow the five men to reaffirm their humanity in a modern social space which seems to strip them of just that quality but for the twenty first century reader the 'falling man' foreshadows one of the most distressing images of the September 11 attacks on New York. This is not, of course, to suggest that Mo in some way predicts these future terrorist attacks upon the United States. Nevertheless, as we have seen, elsewhere in this novel and in *Renegade*, violence, religious intolerance and the threat posed by terrorism pose a ubiquitous and very real threat. As such, we might speculate that in novels such as *Brownout* many of the pieces are already in place even if the jigsaw is not yet assembled in the order we would recognise today.

Another example, this time from *Renegade*, will serve to further illustrate the point. Towards the end of his 'steerage-class world tour'²⁷² Castro washes up, appropriately enough given his name, in Cuba. During his stay on the island Castro twice makes passing mention of an American airbase hidden away on the East of the island. As with the hotel fire, the references to the base are not particularly significant, the first coming because it appears somewhat anomalous for the Americans to have a military foothold in Communist Cuba and the second because it reminds Castro of his home island of Cebu in the Philippines (which is also home to an American base). Yet for

²⁷² Boyd Tonkin, 'The Books Interview: Timothy Mo – Postcards from the edge', *Independent* (10 July 1999) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-books-interview-timothy-mo-postcards-from-the-edge-1105400.html>> [accessed 4 March 2010].

the contemporary reader, Guantanamo Bay has come to stand as a metaphor for the deep racial, religious and moral divisions which have characterised the first decade of the twenty first century. Again, Mo could not have predicted the significance that Guantanamo would acquire in the future but it does not take a great leap to suggest that Castro – stateless, disenfranchised, ‘illegal’ – is exactly the type of character who would find himself incarcerated and forgotten about in Guantanamo just a few years later. Indeed, the references to Guantanamo give Castro’s earlier words on his and his fellow illegal workers’ feelings of limbo, the sense of having disappeared out of view, a haunting and highly contemporary tone. We are perhaps reminded of Gideon Chase’s words in *An Insular Possession* concerning the ‘larger moments, not apprehended at the time but perceived only in retrospect’ (p.443). Such retrospect is often afforded the reader where it is denied to the protagonists and even, as is the case in *Brownout* and *Renegade*, to the author.

During his tenure with the Smiths in Hong Kong, Castro is party to the discovery of a somewhat scandalous diary belonging to the Smiths’ teenage daughter. Writing of the fall-out from that discovery, and of the act of writing itself, Castro comments:

You put things under a magnifying glass and fissures become ravines. Too much light, too much focus and you burned what you scrutinised, scorched the page. When you thought, shaped, and scribbled, you were distilling, you got essence; and it burned like witch-hazel. (p.264)

Such is the process undertaken by Mo in *Brownout* and *Renegade*. In his examination of the Philippines and its interaction with the wider world in the final decades of the twentieth century, he throws his magnifying glass over the fissures of that world. In *Brownout*, these fissures are most apparent in the academic conference which occupies the second half of the novel but they are evident too in the earlier part of the novel, for example in the prejudices that the well-to-do Inits encounter when

travelling outwith the borders of their own nation, or in the portrayals of organised crime or the commodification of sex which expose the seedier side of modern cosmopolitan society. But it is in the relative failure of cross-cultural contact, prefigured in the novel's controversial Prologue and in the Inits' experiences abroad but exposed most clearly in the international academic conference in the second half of the novel, that cosmopolitanism's greatest challenge is laid bare. Despite meticulous planning – not least in terms of time – the conference breaks down as national, racial and religious allegiances undermine the conference's cosmopolitan credentials and the event veers towards its violent end. The violence of the modern world is similarly never far from the surface in *Renegade*, which again foregrounds the problems and challenges of cross-cultural contact at the end of the twentieth century. Castro's exile exposes him to many of the ills of modern society – illegal labour, religious intolerance, the abuse and persecution of the dispossessed and the stateless – whilst standing also for the larger concerns of alienation, agency and ethics which affect the majority of cosmopolitan citizens. The novel also attests to the dual-temporality of the modern age – the simultaneous sense both of busyness and stasis – which I have identified across the various novels considered in this thesis. Whilst it would be wrong to claim, with the benefit of hindsight, that these two novels show evidence of the world as it would become in the early twenty first century, what seems without doubt is that in placing his magnifying glass over the fissures of the late twentieth century world, Mo does indeed identify the seeds of things which would go very wrong indeed in the following decade.

Conclusion

I began this work with a recent quotation from Kazuo Ishiguro which has framed much of what I have attempted to achieve in my subsequent analysis of both his own novels and those of his contemporary, Timothy Mo. In bringing this thesis to a conclusion, it would be helpful to recall some of Ishiguro's words. Referring to his choice of temporal setting for his series of short stories, *Nocturnes*, Ishiguro explains that he 'didn't want them set in the contemporary world, but [rather] one that wasn't conscious of things like the clash of civilisations'²⁷³ and notes that, with the benefit of hindsight, 'you can see a lot of the seeds of things that didn't go so well'²⁷⁴. In my conclusion, I want to consider more carefully what he means by these terms, and to recount the ways in which my analysis of the novels helps to illustrate these ideas. In addition, I will turn to the title of my thesis to consider the extent to which the contemporary fiction of Ishiguro and Mo considers questions of temporality and agency in the cosmopolitan world.

Things that didn't go so well

Ishiguro's reference to 'things that didn't go so well' is worthy of one of his narrators in its ambiguity, the imprecision leaving the reader to decide exactly what these 'things' might be. Despite that ambiguity, it seems fair to assume that he refers in large part to the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent and so-called 'war on terror'. Indeed, Ishiguro suggests 9/11 as the historical event which marks the end of that 'time of great optimism'²⁷⁵, contrasting that desperate moment with the sense of optimism associated with the historical marker which begins his chosen period, the fall of the Berlin Wall. The threat of terrorism associated with 9/11 and all that has

²⁷³ Appleyard, p.6.

²⁷⁴ Appleyard, p.6.

²⁷⁵ Appleyard, p.6.

followed that event manifests itself most clearly in the two novels considered in Chapter Four, *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* and *Renegade or Halo*². Although perpetrated by a local group, the attack which ends the international conference in *Brownout* bears all of the hallmarks of those incidents which will become sadly familiar to the global citizen in the first decade of the twenty first century, whilst the news report of hotel fire victims plunging to their deaths predicts, albeit unintentionally, one particularly disturbing aspect of the attacks on the World Trade Centre. Similarly innocuous are the references to Guantanamo Bay in *Renegade*, their significance increased only later by the reader, with the benefit of dark hindsight. More concrete are the religious divisions encountered by Castro, most notably as he accompanies the Smiths' daughters on their vacation around South-East Asia. Their encounter with the stone-throwing mob intolerant of their liberal Western beachwear is perhaps the most direct portent of the divisions which are emerging, pointing beyond just the threat of terrorism and towards a larger clash of cultures and values which is the larger context of Ishiguro's 'things that didn't go so well' and to which I will return shortly.

Whilst neither these two novels nor the others considered in this thesis could ever predict what was to come in the following century, what they do attest to is the fact that the events of 9/11 did not come out of the clear blue September skies. The novels of Ishiguro and Mo reveal some of the tensions and unevenness which existed in the decades prior to this and suggest that 11 September 2001 should be viewed not as a starting point but as a staging post of a far longer-running conflict. That unevenness is everywhere in the novels, for example in the generational conflict which is built both thematically and structurally into Ishiguro's novels and which suggests that the brave

new cosmopolitan future is neither open to all nor as complete a break from the past as it seems, or in Mo's novels, in the Danuese resistance group in *The Redundancy of Courage* – a group itself stratified according to genealogy, skin shade and sexuality – persecuted, hunted and forced to live hand to mouth in the mountains as a result of an invasion which has tacit global backing, or in the sex workers in *Brownout* or the illegal labourers in *Renegade*. The unevenness is present in any and every grouping of human beings in the novels, as suggested by the example of the Danuese resistance fighters, but perhaps the greatest inequality remains that between East and West. For all that they are representatives of a new cosmopolitan literature, with one foot in the East, the novels of Ishiguro and Mo suggest that the West – and in particular the United States – continues to exert a disproportionate level of influence upon the rest of the world.

A brief recap of the geopolitical landscape of the various novels considered may help to illustrate the enduring imbalance between East and West. Japan may flourish in the post-war period in *Pale View* and *Artist*, but it is a flowering built upon Western – and particularly American – foundations. Furthermore, just as Ishiguro counts 9/11 as the violent act which marks the end of a particular period of optimism and (apparently) peaceful cohabitation, so the rebuilding of Japan and her economy along Western lines is predicated upon perhaps the most violent act of all - the dropping of two atomic bombs by a Western power upon the Asian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Similarly, whilst the unspoken backdrop in *Remains*, that of the Suez Crisis, suggests a potential recalibration of world power in which the East can face up to the West on more of an even footing, in reality that event speaks more of Britain's weakening role in the world rather than a larger realignment of global influence. The real emerging

power in *Remains*, as in most of the novels studied in this thesis, is the United States. Senator Lewis's brief but significant intervention in the international conference attests to America's growing political influence whilst its post-war cultural hegemony is figured through the new American ownership of Darlington Hall. Something of the weakening state of British world influence is present also in *Orphans*, where Banks's lack of agency in Shanghai is mirrored by the British and international communities as a whole as they stand back, helpless to intervene, as Japan advances upon its Chinese neighbour. But that Japanese imperial momentum is tempered by the reader's knowledge of what would shortly follow (and which has already been, in the case of *Pale View* and *Artist*).

A similar imbalance is apparent in Mo's novels. Whilst *An Insular Possession* is concerned with the establishment of Hong Kong as a British possession, the narrative is haunted by the time of its publication, and the knowledge that the island is to be returned to the Chinese. But any sense of the Chinese emerging as a global force is undermined – for the time being at least - by the fact that they are denied any kind of voice in the novel. Instead it is the American protagonists who sound the discordant note and foreshadow the rise of their nation as the predominant global power in the second half of the twentieth century. In *The Redundancy of Courage*, the (thinly disguised) Indonesian invasion of East Timor appears at first to be a local affair but as the focus expands, the hidden hand of the West again emerges as *both* East Timor and, to an extent, Indonesia are revealed as pawns in the much larger global game. Both *Brownout* and *Renegade* are concerned with the place of one small South-East Asian nation – the Philippines – in the world at large. In both, the irresistible pull of the West - and America in particular - is clear, suggesting that if these novels are

representative of the cosmopolitan condition at the end of the twentieth century, that condition is one in which the influence of the West is writ large.

The continuing imbalance between East and West which is present in the work of Ishiguro and Mo points to another of the ways in which these novels challenge and problematise the narrative of cosmopolitanism even as they help to write it. As we have already seen, in his explanation of the timeframe he selected for *Nocturnes*, Ishiguro refers to the period as a time in which people were not ‘conscious of things like the clash of civilisations’. As with his reference to the ‘seeds of things that didn’t go so well’ there is an implication here that although that ‘clash of civilisations’ emerged upon the Western consciousness in the wake of 9/11, it has its roots in the preceding decades. As such, the enduring dominance of the West, and in particular of America, suggests a degree of cross cultural conflict which is another of the features common to all of the novels considered in this thesis.

Clash of civilisations

One of the key claims of cosmopolitanism is that of a shared humanity which transcends artificially constructed national borders and identities. However, time and again the novels considered here figure the return of that nation, however artificially it may have been constructed, depicting the cosmopolitan space as one of conflict and hostility between competing groups and nationalities. To return to some of the terminology I touched upon in my Introduction, more often than not in the novels of Ishiguro and Mo the cosmopolitan space appears to be less Bhabha’s positive ‘Third Space’ of negotiation, hybridity and cross-cultural cohabitation and more Schoene’s ‘ou-topian’ zone of discord and enmity. In an interview to promote *Renegade or Halo*², Mo commented that ‘[i]t seems...absolutely demonstrable that cultures are

different...And if they're different, they will by definition be unequal'²⁷⁶. The eight novels considered in the present work appear to go out of their way to prove those words true.

Much of my work in this thesis has been concerned, then, with identifying the cross-cultural conflict represented in the novels of Ishiguro and Mo. In Chapter One I examined the ways in which the post-war influence of America upon Japan was not always the benevolent one it appeared to be. I suggested, for example, that in *A Pale View of Hills* the largely unspoken but insidious fallout of the atomic bomb, the novel's intertextual relationship with *Madama Butterfly*, the ghost motif, and Etsuko's apparent loneliness and alienation in rural England all point towards a clash of cultures which the harmonic postwar image of economic rebuilding of the nation fails to paper over entirely. In *An Artist of the Floating World* too there is a sense that the American influence may not be entirely welcome or enthusiastically embraced. This is played out in particular in the conflict between the older generation, who are held responsible for Japan's militaristic turn in the first half of the century and the new, outward looking generation who turn to the influence and ideas of America and the outside world in order to rebuild and rejuvenate their country. Amid that rebuilding, however, discomfiting shadows of the past remain – whether in terms of architecture or ideals – which suggest that the Americanisation of the country is far from absolute. A similar sense of discomfort is evident in the novels explored in Chapter Two. In *The Remains of the Day* this manifests itself both in the clashing social and cultural values which Stevens is exposed to in his road trip across England and, more so still, in the apparently benevolent hegemonic control exerted by the United States and

²⁷⁶ Tonkin, 'Postcards from the Edge'.

represented through the new American owner of Darlington Hall. Whilst the regime under Mr Farraday seems more liberal and unconstrained than the oppressive class-ridden society-in-miniature that existed in Lord Darlington's day, Stevens finds himself alienated by the change, disoriented, unable to grasp the art of bantering and thus speak the language of this new world, and reduced to a mere commodity, an American's idea of what an English butler should be. Whilst many of these cultural clashes bubble below the surface in Ishiguro's novel, they come to the boil in *When We Were Orphans*, as cosmopolitan Shanghai becomes the space of tri-partite conflict between the Chinese, the Japanese, and the international community at large, each no longer able to co-exist in harmony and careering head-long towards inevitable and full-scale conflict.

In Mo's novels too the potential for cosmopolitan cross-cultural contact goes largely unfulfilled. In the novels examined in Chapter Three that contact is given an historical context. In *An Insular Possession*, the American protagonists appear to be endowed with a degree of historical agency, most notably through their publication, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*. However, the positive, multicultural agenda of that publication is largely drowned out by the altogether stronger and more powerful voice of *The Canton Monitor*, hegemonic, reactionary, and protector of British interests – most notably the right to continue the illegal and harmful trade in opium – in the region. The Chinese themselves have no voice. As Gideon Chase discovers, there can be no 'perfected correspondence' with their Chinese hosts as even his peaceable efforts to this end are turned to violent purposes both by *and* against the Chinese. A similar violence pervades *The Redundancy of Courage*, which fictionalises the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, and the subsequent resistance to that invasion. In

fact, in *Redundancy* the reader is presented with a dark portrayal of transnational cooperation and interaction as the self-interested West offers its tacit backing to the invasion and abandons the Danuese to their fate. Finally, in Chapter Four, I examined Mo's two most recent novels, suggesting that both *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* and *Renegade or Halo*² paint a gloomy picture of cosmopolitan interaction in the final decades of the twentieth century. In *Brownout*, the narrative's two-part structure emphasises the largely divisive effect that the outside world visits upon the local. The Filipino characters so vividly portrayed in the first part of the novel disappear to the margins in the second, muscled out by the international community to which they play host as the grand international conference, whose cosmopolitan cast are drawn together in the spirit of mutual concern and negotiation, descends into national interest, group politics and violent discord. In *Renegade*, it is the turn of the Filipino to go out into the world. But rather than find that cosmopolitan world one of vibrancy, openness, and opportunity, Castro instead finds himself cast adrift in a hostile environment in which violence, genocide, and racial and sexual intolerance are the prevailing forces.

To recap, it is my claim that it is possible to read the novels of Ishiguro and Mo somewhat against the grain in order to reveal something of the tensions and conflicts which would come to the fore in the early years of the twenty first century. That is, whilst it has been common to view these authors as representative of a somewhat celebratory new cosmopolitan form of literature, their novels reveal that cosmopolitanism to be more troubled and fractured than has often been acknowledged. In particular, the work of these two novelists points to the fact that the cosmopolitan condition is often characterised by an imbalance or unevenness in

which older binaries of East and West appear to retain some of their grip and in which cross-cultural contact remains a difficult, antagonistic and sometimes violent process. In the remainder of my conclusion, I wish to turn to the implications of such readings for questions of agency and responsibility, with particular reference to notions of cosmopolitan busyness and mobility. This in turn will lead to a consideration of the factor which has framed much of the work in this thesis – the nature of cosmopolitan time.

A matter of time?

In my introduction to this thesis, I stated that I wished to explore the relationship between ‘time’ and ‘the times’, that is the ways in which the narrative treatment of time interfaces with the modern experience. In my subsequent analysis of the novels of Ishiguro and Mo I have attempted to suggest some of the ways in which a narratological approach can go beyond merely identifying *how* time is structured and represented in such novels. To return to the distinction made by Paul Ricoeur, whilst all narratives are *tales of time*, I have suggested that each of the novels considered here are also to some extent *tales about time*, so that even although time may not be their central concern, these works nevertheless reveal in their temporal structures a number of political and cultural issues. In the remainder of this conclusion I would like to outline some of these concerns.

As we might expect of works which relate the cosmopolitan experience at the end of the twentieth century, there is a lot going on in the novels of Ishiguro and Mo. A sense of busyness is one of the things which links all of these protagonists. As I discussed both in the introduction and in my analysis of *Remains*, Bruce Robbins reads professional busyness as a commitment to the cosmopolitan, an expression of

cosmopolitan agency. Whilst in Chapter Two I argued against such a reading, it does nevertheless seem fair to suggest that professional busyness and a more general sense of insufficient time are common features of the cosmopolitan condition. Whether it is Ono rushing to clear his name before the investigations begin for Noriko's *miai*, Stevens making hasty preparations for the conference to be held at Darlington Hall, or racing across country to persuade Miss Kenton to return to service, Banks racing against time to locate his kidnapped parents and avert war, Eastman struggling to meet the fortnightly printing deadline for the *Lin Tin Bulletin*, Ng and his fellow resistance fighters staying one desperate step ahead of the *malai* invader, or Victoria Init organising and keeping on schedule her grand international symposium, the protagonists of these novels are invariably faced with a deadline, a race against time. Similarly, for all their historical settings, the characters in these novels are asked to cope with some thoroughly modern working practices. The production line which Ono encounters at Master Takeda's studio, the staff cuts and need for multitasking which spark Stevens's attempts to re-recruit Miss Kenton, Boyet holding down two jobs and just making ends meet, or the near-endless economic migration endured by Castro and others: all seem to reflect the work practices and patterns of the contemporary, globalised workplace.

Yet if these novels reflect modern working practices, then they also question the efficacy of such practices. The busyness on display more often than not achieves very little. The negotiations for Noriko's wedding proceed despite, rather than because of, Ono's attentions, the conference at Darlington Hall fails to alter the course of history and prevent the outbreak of war, Stevens is unable to persuade Miss Kenton to return, Banks neither locates his parents nor turns the tide of conflict, the *Bulletin* cannot

dislodge the *Monitor* from its position of power, nor prevent the trade in opium, the Danuese resistance fighters are rounded up and defeated, the symposium in Gobernador de Leon ends in discord, hostility and violence, even Castro, for all his displacement, winds up right back where he started from. What these novels appear to present is an overwhelmingly gloomy picture of frustrated cosmopolitan agency, a sense of working incredibly hard just to stand still. It is, it seems, incredibly difficult for the individual to make an impression upon the world at large. There *are* moments which raise questions of historical agency and ethics: Ono's dalliance with Japanese fascism, for example, and the potential repercussions postwar; or Stevens's complicity in the dismissal of the Jewish maids; or Ng's willingness to betray his friends and countrymen in order to survive; or Castro's passive resistance to Haydee's murder. For the most part, however, these characters at best find themselves unable to enforce their agency upon the world and at worst grossly overestimate that agency. Of the latter, Ishiguro's narrators are the prime examples: revelations made in the primary narrative of *Artist* cast doubt over the extent to which Ono was an important figure in the imperial Japanese government, Stevens knowingly overstates the role he played in the historical developments taking place at Darlington Hall, Banks – despite being the most celebrated of London detectives – proves hopelessly impotent on the world stage, despite his promises to the international community that he will soon end the growing crisis. Whilst Mo's characters on the whole make a slightly better fist of it, they too ultimately prove to be ineffective. *An Insular Possession* ends with the *River Bee* defunct and the *Monitor* loudly celebrating the British victory over the Chinese and the founding of Hong Kong. *The Redundancy of Courage* closes with the resistance defeated and Ng's homeland occupied, his narrative – like that of Etsuko in *Pale View* – one of exile, falling upon the deaf ears of an uncaring international

community. And in *Brownout* and *Renegade*, the Filipino protagonists prove for the most part unable to withstand the forces of the world outside, nor make any impression upon it. For all their busyness, these individuals discover the difficulty of making an impact upon the world at large.

One further aspect of that cosmopolitan busyness is the mobility demonstrated by most of the characters and protagonists in these novels. What is striking about that mobility is the fact that they are, for the most part, uneasy or reluctant travellers. Their experiences suggest that if the large scale movement of people across borders is a part of the modern, cosmopolitan world, then for many of its citizens it is the unchosen reasons for travel, such as exile or economic migration, rather than the chosen reasons, which fuel that movement. Castro's exile in *Renegade* provides the extreme example, his passive complicity in the murder of Haydee, the subsequent murder of his friends by the Ukrainian ship crew, and his various experiences as an illegal labourer in the hot spots of the global underworld raising questions surrounding the nature and ethics of the global movement of people at the end of the twentieth century. If Castro's is an extreme case, then the other protagonists are similarly affected by a need to move which is rarely of their own choosing. Both Etsuko and Ng must narrate their tales from exile, whilst the American protagonists in *An Insular Possession* similarly find themselves far from home. Their exile is economic of course, a fate they share to a degree with Ono who, although remaining within the borders of his homeland, becomes in the secondary narrative something of a flâneur figure, wandering the countryside from one post to the next, in search of a professional satisfaction which continually eludes him. Even Stevens, nominally a tourist rather than an economic migrant or political exile, is decidedly uncomfortable

in the role, his strategy of mimicking the travelling gentleman falling apart as he comes into contact with the outside world. If travel and mobility is a necessary part of the cosmopolitan world, the novels studied in this thesis would seem to suggest it is a necessary evil rather than an expression of newfound freedom.

I have proposed, then, that the novels of Ishiguro and Mo suggest a somewhat negative contemporary cosmopolitan condition which can be framed as a sense of busyness. Of course, the suggestion that for many people the contemporary experience is one of being harassed and short of time is hardly groundbreaking. What is perhaps more unexpected is the fact that this contemporary time-bind very often appears to be undermined by a simultaneous and somewhat contradictory temporal state. Each of the novels considered in this thesis reveals a kind of dual-temporality, whereby the pressures on time which I have described above are accompanied by a conflicting sense of stasis which seems very much at odds with the frantic nature of modern life. In Ishiguro's novels, this temporal ambiguity is built into the structure of the novels, whereby typically the secondary narrative depicts the narrator in a state of great busyness but where by the time of the primary narrative they find themselves excluded from the cut and thrust of contemporary life. In Chapters One and Two I framed this dual structure in terms firstly of the narrators being 'out of time' and secondly of 'time running out'. That is, in each of the four Ishiguro novels there is a sense that by the time of the primary narrative the narrators have had their day, and they somehow do not fit in with the bustle and opportunity of the contemporary world. Thus the structure of these novels contributes to the sense of alienation felt by the older generation as they find themselves excluded from the bright new future. However, some of this dual-temporality finds its way into even the secondary

narrative. In *Pale View* and *Artist*, for example, there is alongside the sense of change and optimism the feeling of stagnation that Etsuko identifies as enveloping Nagasaki, ‘as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better’(p.12). Similarly, for all that both Stevens in *Remains* and Banks in *Orphans* undertake missions which have deadlines attached, so that there is a clear sense that ‘time runs out’, both men seem struck by a dilatoriness which I have termed ‘sedate urgency’, as if any agency they may inflict upon the world is repeatedly deferred and frustrated.

Mo’s novels similarly illustrate this odd sense of stasis which seems to afflict cosmopolitan time. In Chapter Three, I considered *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage* in terms of ‘time and nation’, suggesting that each stages the contest between the linear pedagogical time of nation and the anachronistic performative time of the cosmopolitan. One of the ways in which the latter manifests itself in *An Insular Possession* is in the form of the ‘distended present’ or ‘time-lag’, an odd break in the linear temporality of nation in which time appears to slow down and open up a potential space of cross-cultural contact, a potential which ultimately proves to be frustrated. Similarly, in *Redundancy*, the frantic pace of the narrative of resistance and survival is undermined by frequent moments of prolepsis which break-up that pace, highlighting the fact that Ng narrates that tale from the outside, in leisurely and frustrated exile. Finally, in Chapter 4, I consider *Brownout* and *Renegade* under the heading ‘cosmopolitan time’. Again, the dual temporality is evident. Alongside the busyness of Init’s international academic conference or Castro’s desperate flight from (in)justice are moments of recess and abeyance, reflected perhaps in the elongated nature of the conference itself in *Brownout* or, more pointedly in *Renegade*, in Castro’s observation that, since he had fled the

Philippines, '[m]y time hadn't been my own...[t]he concept of wasting time just didn't apply to me' (p.370). But it is just this concept of wasting time when time is at a premium, of the frustration caused by these moments of stasis when there is so much to do, which seems to characterise the modern experience and which emerges from these novels as the surprising counterpart to the more predictable temporal experience of busyness and time-bind.

Perhaps, then, it is within the space created by this dual-temporality, that the potential for cross-cultural contact and harmonic cosmopolitan co-existence arises. But perhaps also it is here that the seeds of things which will go wrong are sown. If the cosmopolitan fiction of Ishiguro and Mo attests to anything, it is to the failure of that cross-cultural contact in the latter decades of the twentieth century, to its unfulfilled potential. In the cultural incommensurability that they depict, in the unsavoury reasons behind contemporary mobility, in the frustrated agency and often-futile busyness of the modern citizen, in the clash of cultures and ideals, these novels challenge celebratory theories of cosmopolitanism and explore the weaknesses and blind spots of such a transnational view. The novels of Kazuo Ishiguro and Timothy Mo do not – cannot – predict the future. But they do perhaps reveal that the emergence of the deeper national, cultural and religious divisions which have characterised the first years of the twenty first century was indeed just a matter of time.

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